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THE SMART SET

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JOHN
PAGET'S
PROGRESS,"

a romance of
Bloomsbury and
Wall Street,
an international love
story that is different—

By W. H. G. WYNDHAM-MARTYN.

LONDON

Essex Publishing Company, 452 Fifth Avenue, New York

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PRINCETON

Big Pools Trying to Make a Market for Their Stocks

¶ The New York Stock Market presents exceptional opportunities for large and quick profits now. But one must know *where to buy* and must have the wit to *take his profits* when the right time comes. There is no doubt that the *important financial interests hold the great bulk of the stocks*. They have them to sell, but of course want to get a good price for them. The general situation points so strongly toward the *greatest prosperity the country ever knew* that they will scarcely care to sell except at their own price. Consequently the outlook is for some *furious bull manipulation* this Fall with the idea of securing a wide public patronage for the stock market.

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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

No. 1

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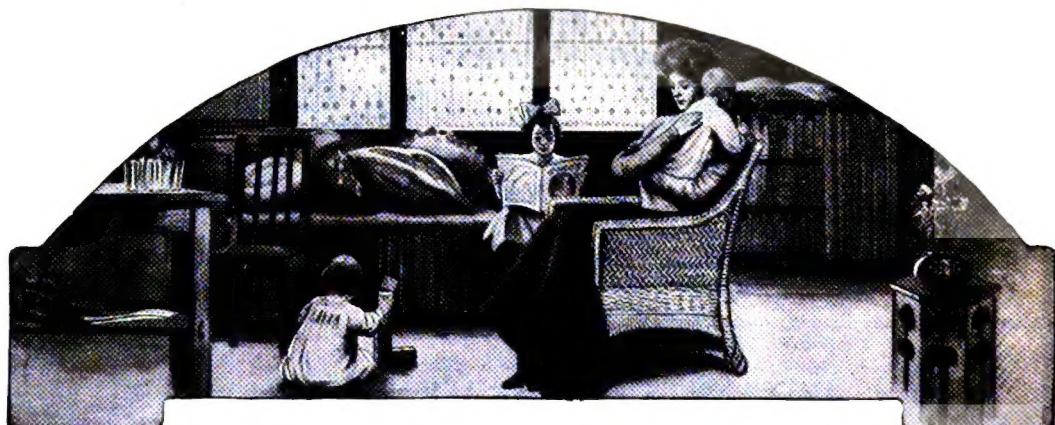
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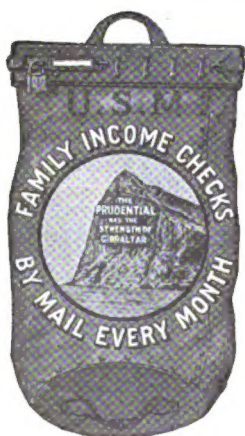
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JOHN PAGET'S PROGRESS

By W. H. G. WYNDHAM-MARTYN

JOHN PAGET COURTENAYE TREVENOSE, Viscount Mountcastle, cantered gaily along the close wind-shorn turf by the edge of the cliff. The scent of the spring was in the air; cowslips were star-scattered in the grass; the Atlantic playing gently at the base of the great rocks had none of the menace that too often on that western coast spelled disaster to the little fishing boats which put out from the tiny, almost inclosed, harbors. And what perhaps more than any one thing lent him this happiness was the fact that, after three years of service with his regiment, he was home again with a year's leave of absence.

He had spent most of the day in visiting the old farmers, friends of his youth, whose little farms were his father's property and would one day be his. He was on his way now to an old cross which stood in a hollow of the hills and had enjoyed a certain semi-mystic reputation for centuries. St. Vian's Cross was a Greek cross of the ninth century. On one side of it the seeker might find, were he painstaking enough, the inscription, "*Vianatus fecit hanc crucem pro anima sua.*" But who this old saint was who erected the cross for the good of his soul no saints' calendar showed. But never a peasant girl in the neighborhood but came to it with an air of reverence, for it was said that no man who vowed his love beneath its shadow had ever broken faith.

Lord Mountcastle was visiting it, as he had done other old associations, rather to renew ancient memories than to make vows beside it. His vows had been made in less rustic spots, as a rule. The old chestnut hunter he bestrode

went soberly along. What flashes of ardor he showed he reserved for the glad time when hounds were running. His hoofs trod the turf so silently that he had brought his rider to the top of the steps leading down to the cross without disturbing a couple who were sitting on the granite base of the weather-beaten relic.

The girl, golden-haired and slender, wore a dark blue riding habit, and the man, soldierly and strong, also in riding togs, was talking earnestly. As Mountcastle watched, too startled to speak, the man had thrown his arms about her and the girl had burst into a passion of weeping. Mountcastle was by nature a man cool and collected under the most trying conditions; but to see the girl he was to marry sobbing out an eternal farewell in the arms of a close friend filled him with a strange confusion. It was plain enough, as he sat there watching and listening, that Mildred Heronhurst loved Captain Ganton, and was to marry Mountcastle because of his great possessions and his title which her mother coveted for her. He gathered, furthermore, that Ganton was making this his last good-bye.

He was pondering just how to make the two aware of his presence when his horse saved him the trouble by whinnying gently to two horses hidden from sight who were tethered behind some clumps of gorse.

Ganton sprang to his feet and beheld his friend smiling at him. The girl, who seemed less startled than her companion, clung to his arm, and silently they waited until the other had tied up his horse and come down the old steps toward them.

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Mountcastle seated himself on a turfy ledge and lit a cigarette. Then he waved his arms generally to the scenery. "Just the right sort of a stage setting for this sort of thing. The old lovers' cross, spring flowers, birds singing and a blue sky. You did it rather well, too. Not the first rehearsal, eh?"

"I don't know what you heard," said the man slowly, "but I am going away tonight, and, remember, I loved her long before she was engaged to you."

"Is that true, Milly?" demanded Mountcastle.

"Yes," she answered.

"And in spite of it you were going to marry me. Thank you kindly, Milly."

"It wasn't her fault," cried the man. "How can she stand against the Marchioness? Her mother—oh, you know her mother, Mountcastle. Can't you see that she has hardly dared to call her soul her own?"

Mountcastle looked at the slight, shrinking girl and then thought of that imperious lady, her mother, tall, Roman-nosed, fiery and intractable.

"We'll dismiss Her Ladyship for the moment," he returned, "and come back to you, Ganton. The question is: What are you going to do?"

"My boat leaves in a week's time. I join my regiment at Chatham tomorrow."

Mountcastle laughed softly. "What! After all these vows made by St. Vian's Cross?"

"That isn't kind of you," said the girl, speaking for the first time. "You know that what he has said is true."

"Good heavens!" cried Mountcastle. "Kind! I am chidden for not being kind when I find mine own familiar friend has supplanted me in the affections of my fiancée!"

"I loved him long before we were engaged," she said steadily. "I shall always love him."

"That seems pretty final," said the other. "Breathed in the hearing of the old Cross I don't see any way out of it except for Ganton to take my

place at the altar. I can assure you, my dear Mildred, that deeply as I respect you, I am not the man to marry—knowingly, at all events—a woman who is in love with someone else." He rose to his feet and had passed half-way up the steps before he turned to Ganton.

"Ganton," he said, "if you will make it convenient to drop in for a game of billiards after dinner tonight we'll talk this matter over."

The girl looked quickly at one and then the other. It was evident that she feared some ill ending to such a meeting.

"Don't be frightened, Milly," said Mountcastle. "Before a duel there are many little formalities to go through. Playing billiards isn't one of them." He turned to the other: "You'll come?"

"Yes," said Ganton. "You can expect me at nine."

Mountcastle tightened the girth of his hunter and stroked his ear gently. "Rufus, my son," he remarked confidentially, "was there ever a more astounding piece of luck!"

With which unusual remark he took a cross-country route to the Tudor mansion, which was the principal country seat of his family, and presently came into his father's presence.

The Earl of St. Vian was a singularly handsome man of sixty, who for the sins of his ancestors, aided in some degree by his own indiscretions, was laid fast with gout. He had been the hardest rider in a set of hard riding men, and the prospect of a retired life which necessitated the constant contemplation of a bandaged foot might have spoiled the temper of a better man.

But gout had not spoiled his temper. It was not that he looked upon his affliction as the work of a singularly unforgiving Providence, but rather that he was possessed of the certainty that by rigorous dieting and the supervision of Dr. Bagot, his physician, he would yet baffle his ailment and return to the world of men, the one man of his contemporaries to do so.

He looked up as his son entered and his face brightened.

"Glad to see you," he said. "You are the one person I know who never takes things seriously. It's your greatest charm."

"Thanks," laughed Mountcastle.

"I've never been able to fathom the reason of it," returned his father. "Now your brother is so serious that the clerical life yawns for him."

"I'm serious now," said Mountcastle. "In fact, I think you'll be serious, too."

"What is it?" demanded the Earl quickly.

"A two-line item in the *Morning Post*."

"Today's *Morning Post*?"

"It's not yet put in," answered his son. "When it is, it will read that the marriage arranged between Viscount Mountcastle, eldest son of the Earl of St. Vian, and Lady Mildred Heronhurst, third daughter of the Dowager Marchioness of Morwenstowe, will not take place."

"Why not?" snapped the other.

"She's in love with Ganton. I heard her say she hated me. Pleasant, wasn't it?" Mountcastle sighed a little wearily. "They were at the Cross saying good-bye. I overheard accidentally. I'm very glad I did."

"Glad? You were glad? What do you mean?"

"I've always had a suspicion that I wasn't a free agent. I kissed Milly under the mistletoe as I've kissed other girls, you know, when her mother burst in and congratulated me. She always overawes me a little, and before I knew it, well, I was engaged. Of course I've always been awfully fond of Milly, but when I saw her kissing Ganton and saw how frightfully unhappy they both were, I felt delighted."

"You're charitable," growled his father, who took the news badly.

"Delighted at my escape, I mean."

The Earl looked a trifle doubtful. "Of course you feel this, although you pretend you don't. But, well, I'm very fond of Milly. Don't be too hard on her. Her mother is the very devil when it comes to having her own way. She very nearly married me herself

when I was your age. The very recollection makes me nervous now."

"I shall certainly be far from hard," answered Mountcastle. "Believe it or not, I was very pleased to find it out in time. I've been away from home for three years, and the love letters I wrote and the love letters I received were not quite the sort one reads of in novels. I tried to be affectionate once or twice, but those epistles Milly took as highly humorous. In return she wrote about hunting and fishing. That's all very nice, but—"

"But what?" demanded his father.

"Hardly what one looks for."

"Your fault entirely," cried the Earl. "Why, you never paid her the compliment of being jealous. I have often wondered how long she would stand your mild affection. Had she been your sister you would have been a model brother, but with one's fiancée—"

"I know, I know," said Mountcastle.

"Nothing of the sort," asserted the Earl. "How should you?"

"My dear father," Mountcastle said calmly, "if you had seen those two people saying good-bye it would have shown you that there is more in Milly than we think there is. I realized then that I didn't know the girl a bit. It was beautiful in its way. At first I was staggered, but very soon I knew that I had had a lucky escape from marrying a girl who was as much in love with another man as she. For a few minutes, I assure you, I felt thoroughly serious."

"What's to be done now?" It was plain that the Earl was far from being satisfied that his son was not meditating some revenge.

"First of all," said the other, "we must make it possible for them to marry. You were telling me that lots of the London ground rents fall due this year. That makes us richer than ever, I suppose?"

"I confess," retorted the Earl, "that your vagrant thoughts escape me. Why?"

"I want you to settle something on Mildred on condition of her marrying

Ganton. The Marchioness will be angry, but she won't be so angry if you settle something heavy. Milly's your goddaughter, remember."

"Mountcastle," said the Earl, with more emotion than was usual with him, "you're a very decent sort. I'll see that Ganton and Milly have enough to please even the Marchioness."

"That's splendid," cried Mountcastle enthusiastically. "Ganton is coming in tonight for a game of billiards. Will you settle it with him so that he can go to the old lady and tell her?"

"You don't want to see him?" queried the Earl.

"I shan't be able to," said the other, evading the question. "I am taking the early train to Paddington."

"Running away?" demanded Lord St. Vian.

"I wouldn't put it quite so baldly as that," responded his son. "I prefer to say I am going away till the thing isn't talked about so much. You know," he added reflectively, "that in instances like these the victim—I am the supposed victim—comes in for the deuce of a lot of pity and some scorn. Nobody will believe I am relieved. They'll think I'm jilted, which is in a measure true. And," he made a gesture of impatience, "I don't want to be pitied and scorned."

"Then it has hurt you more than you say," observed the peer. "My dear boy, if it makes you serious I shall never forgive Milly."

"It's made me think," said Mountcastle slowly.

"Almost as bad," groaned the other. "What is the result of it?"

"That I am much to be pitied for being your son and heir."

"There are those who would change places with you," the Earl told him quietly.

"I am handicapped by it."

"It's not usually looked on in that light." The Earl was not prepared to believe that his son was in earnest.

"My dear father, you must see what I mean."

"I'm open to conviction, which is

another way of saying that nothing you can state will convince me. Go on."

"I was to have married Mildred in September. But for an accident I should have done so, and Ganton would have gone out with his regiment, and, if he'd any luck, would have been killed. What sort of a life should we have led? Do you suppose this would have happened if I hadn't been a courtesy viscount and your heir, with three country seats and Trevenose House in Park Lane?"

"You're not bad-looking," laughed his father. "You have God's gift of youth. Why shouldn't it have happened?"

"Good looks and God's gifts count for nothing with the Marchioness of Morwenstowe, as you know," said Mountcastle impatiently. "Incidentally, I'm not good-looking, and twenty-eight isn't the first sweet bloom of youth, either. It was your money and rank that did it."

"Well, suppose you are right?"

"Then you can only agree that I'm wise in not seeking another such risk."

"You are too much in earnest. In our class we cannot all marry for what is termed the love motive. There are consolations."

"I know," cried Mountcastle, "and I'm tired of seeing men go to the devil while seeking them."

"Really," said the Earl, elevating his eyebrows, "one might suppose you to have been reading cheap and popular fiction written by elderly ladies or unsuccessful clergymen. Pray, what does marriage mean to you?"

Mountcastle laughed. "I'm not to be drawn into a discussion of matrimony with you. I only want you to see that I am handicapped. I am what mothers call a true 'eligible,' and I see now that Lady Morwenstowe simply bullied poor little Milly into keeping engaged to me. Like a fool I never suspected it. Eligibles rarely do suspect anything of this kind. The mothers guard them from it."

"There's one thing to remember, Mountcastle," said his father gravely. "You are my eldest son; and since

your brother has seen fit to join the celibate high church order which he has endowed so largely, it remains necessary that you, at least, marry."

"I was coming to that," cried the son. "If I do marry it will either be a woman who loves me as Milly loves Ganton, or else there won't be any pretense about the matter at all. It's intolerable to think that just because one has money and a title one may have put better men out of the running."

"I see your mind is made up. What is it?"

"Even the men I know may only think me somebody convenient to borrow money from. They may even think me the damndest kind of fool."

The Earl looked at him more kindly. "I know men," he said, "and I can assure you they don't think that of you."

"I shall never believe it unless I can make friends as a man without rank and money. That's what I want to do. To mix with men and women as a plain, ordinary man. It will reduce me to my proper level."

The Earl became serious. "My dear Mountcastle," he said, "that has been done often enough before. As a rule, I believe the guileless ones came home to die. Use your advantages. To throw them away is silly."

"You won't understand," returned the other. "The narrow escape I have had has frightened me. If I must marry I don't want a Mildred."

"I don't know if the Lord of Burleigh has inspired you," said the Earl, "but if so, you must call to mind the fact that the maiden drooped and died, crushed under the burden of an honor to which she was not born. They buried her, very stupidly, I have always thought, in her wedding dress, and altogether the whole experiment was a failure." He sighed. "What is it you want to do? Be definite."

"I want to take my first two names—John Paget—and go where Fate takes me." He laughed cheerfully. "The prospect is enlivening."

His father thought for a moment.

"I shall offer no objections, if you promise to write and tell me where you are. If you don't, you'll be recalled."

"Of course I'll do that," said Mountcastle.

"When you are in your usual spirits," returned the Earl, "you will probably be very much amused at the reception you are going to get. The change from being an eligible to being turned into a detrimental would sour anyone else. If you were a philosopher—and a philosopher," he explained, "is a man who practises what he does not preach—you might add a chapter to the world's knowledge of snobbery. As it is, you will be bored very soon, and finding you need not endure calumnies you will be back within two months."

When his son had gone from the room he wondered if the fact of his own having been an arranged match had anything to do with Mountcastle's behaving in a manner without parallel in his family. He took from a drawer of a cabinet near by the portrait of a very beautiful girl—a miniature set with pearls. He replaced it with a sigh. It was not a picture of his dead countess.

II

THERE was leisure enough in the long journey to London for John Paget to reflect that his venture might very well turn out to be the failure his father had predicted. Here he was, bound for nowhere, in quest of nothing in particular. As John Paget, he was without relations and history. To refuse to answer the questions which might be asked by anyone without discourtesy would leave him open to grave suspicion. No man or woman is so instantly suspected of evil as he who refuses to satisfy ordinary curiosity. These reflections did not daunt Paget. He smiled to himself as he thought of it. "If they want," he remarked to himself—he was the only occupant of the little first class compartment with the glass observation windows which is to be found at the rear of the Paddington Express—"if they want romance they

shall have it." He was elaborating a pleasing history of the Pagets when the London terminus was reached. He had determined that, since he was well known in the Mayfair and Belgraveia districts and in the club region that clusters about Pall Mall, it would be wise for him to retire to some comparatively obscure part of town until he had meditated more upon his projects. He slept that night at the station hotel and sallied forth the next day to the not distant district of Bloomsbury. He chose this spot because he had faint recollections of Walter Besant. It was plainly a land of boarding houses and private hotels, of old-fashioned houses arranged in squares, whose gardens loomed mysteriously through high iron railings. No better place suggested itself to him than a boarding house. John Paget would have no greater advantage in such a sphere than any other boarder; and he was still obsessed with the necessity of shedding rank and wealth and mixing for a time, at any rate, with men and women who might like or dislike him honestly.

There was one house which looked particularly clean and wholesome. The window boxes were filled with spring flowers and the curtains lacked the stiff, prim appearance of the houses on either side.

The landlady was, like most boarding-house keepers, one who had seen better days. But, unlike most of her sisters, she did not impart this fact readily. She informed Paget that she had only two rooms vacant. One would cost him four pounds a week and the other but two. Paget, with no sense of self-denial, immediately took the more expensive one.

"Before you take it," said Mrs. Dean, "I must ask for references. We are very quiet people here and I both ask and give references."

"What sort of reference?" demanded Paget, unprepared for this.

"Any responsible friend," said Mrs. Dean with a smile. "It's a matter of form in its way, but I prefer it."

He hesitated for a moment and saw

suspicion dawning. He thought of his brother, the head of a ritualistic order.

"I can refer you to Father Trevenose, of the Order of the Blessed Meditation."

"That will be most satisfactory," said Mrs. Dean, with some respect. "You refer to the Honorable and Reverend Cyril Trevenose, of course."

Paget groaned. This was a bad beginning. Here was Mrs. Dean, who had been suspicious, looking upon him with marked favor because he had offered the son of a peer for a reference.

"I don't know him very well," he said hastily. "Failing that, you might write to Mr. Smith, the well known butcher of Brixton; we were at school together."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Dean, without interest. "I prefer your first reference. It is customary to dress for dinner. I trust you don't object to that?"

Reassured on this point, she ordered Paget's baggage sent to his room, and informing him that the dinner gong rang at seven, left him to his reflections.

At seven he descended to the dining room and found that some twenty people were there assembled. Mrs. Dean introduced him to his fellow boarders as Mr. Paget, of Brixton.

A young man who was busy scanning the menu looked up at this.

"I used to live on Effra Parade," he said. "Where did you hang out?"

"Mrs. Dean mistook," said Paget, sinking into a chair between two elderly ladies. "I gave as a reference Mr. Smith, of Brixton."

"Smith," queried the young man, "which Smith? Where did he live?"

"In Effra Parade," he answered, seizing on the only name he had ever heard in a locality to which he had never been.

"I don't remember him," said the young man, Myers by name. "What does he do?"

"He butchers," said Paget promptly.

"Never heard of him," retorted Myers suspiciously.

"It's clear to me," said Paget with dignity, "that you do not move in the best butchering circles." He looked across the table at a mild old gentle-

man with faded blue eyes and a depressed appearance. "You've heard of him, sir?" he said, suddenly leaning over toward the old man.

"Frequently, sir, frequently," exclaimed the startled boarder, who rarely spoke and was rarely taken any notice of.

Paget bore his triumph modestly and told the Swiss waiter that he would take white soup.

"You're wise," his neighbor whispered in his ear. He looked up to find a large fat-faced lady regarding him gloomily. She continued: "The clear soup is salt water and burnt sugar." She looked scornfully at her empty plate. For a moment he was startled. Boarding-house types were new to him or he would have known that there was never a boarding establishment but possessed at least one person who eats more and grumbles more than anyone else.

"Give me," said the elderly lady, still in a hoarse whisper, "a full house."

"I suppose you play poker in the evening after dinner?" he hazarded.

"Poker!" she exclaimed. "I spoke of food. Look at that for a plateful!" She eyed her fish disdainfully.

Her manner was depressing and Paget turned to his other neighbor, who evidently sympathized with him.

"Ah," she said, "I feed on art."

"Not very sustaining, is it?" he asked.

Miss James, who did the fashions for the *Morning Mail*, closed her eyes in horror at the suggestion. "Fields," she murmured, "flowers, mountains, everything that is beautiful in nature is food to me."

Paget looked at her doubtfully.

"Don't you feel it too?" she asked.

"I'm afraid I'm too material," he said smiling. "I've never yet had indigestion, and I've found that it's the dyspeptic who eats all these unsatisfying things."

"I fear," said Miss James frigidly, "that you do not understand."

For a few minutes he was left in peace. Then the alimentative lady spoke in a loud and penetrating voice.

"I am not in the habit of moving in what you call the circles of butchery, but since you do, perhaps you can tell me why the price of meat constantly goes up. I know it does," she said, glancing at her plate, "because each week I perceive a smaller portion."

Some few boarders glanced sympathetically at Mrs. Dean, who was generally liked. Most of them waited for Paget's answer.

"I regret that I am not a butcher," he said genially. "I was a wayward youth and rebelled at work. Furthermore, I faint at the sight of blood, and have been since my seventh birthday a member of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. By its charter, as the gentleman opposite can tell you"—he bowed to the old man with the faded blue eyes, who bowed back with an old-fashioned grace and some trace of confusion at his sudden publicity—"no butchers are eligible."

Mrs. Dean took a hand for the honor of her house.

"Mr. Paget's reference to his friend the Honorable and Reverend Cyril Trevenose has satisfied me perfectly."

The alimentative lady looked at him with some show of regard.

"Why," she asked in her penetrating tone, "do you pretend to move in slaughter house society when your friend is the son of our wealthiest earl? I see something underhanded in this."

"I assure you, madam," said Paget desperately, thinking of the little love his brother had evinced for this worldling captain of Hussars, "that my friend Smith will speak more kindly of me than Father Trevenose."

"He may have reason," said the alimentative lady darkly. "I have found," she continued, "that pretenders seldom prosper."

The lady who lived on art nudged him gently. She had long admired the ascetic young Ritualist, who was at the time somewhat of a cult in London.

"Don't take any notice of her," she said gently. "Any friend of Father Trevenose is my friend. Where did you meet the Father?"

It seemed to Paget that the whole table was interested. He could hardly tell them that Father Trevenose had been a singularly ugly baby of less than a week when he as a two-year-old child had been introduced.

"In the mission field," he said calmly.

"He has never been a missionary," exclaimed the alimentative lady, who was wont to grow irritable when her dinner was finished and breakfast yet a great while away. "He spoke at St. Martin's Town Hall last week and told the history of his life. He made no mention of missionary work."

The art lady looked at him reproachfully. "I don't often support Miss Binns," she said, "but she is right in this instance."

By this time Paget was plainly suspected of being an impostor.

"When you next see him," said he convincingly, "ask him if he remembers that All Hallows Eve in Mashonaland when John Paget shot the lion that was waiting at the foot of a palm tree for him."

"A lion!" cried Miss Binns. "A savage king of beasts!"

"A king of beasts who showed terribly poor judgment, in my opinion," returned Paget judicially. "Cyril—Father Trevenose, I should say—although three inches over six feet, has never weighed more than a hundred and fifty pounds, and then he was emaciated from fever. I profess to no knowledge as to how lions reason, but it seemed to be lamentably silly that he should sit there wagging his tail at a very thin man up a palm tree. I have had no respect for lions since."

"Hunger," stated Miss Binns feelingly, "must be satisfied. The reason should be plain to everyone of sense."

"All the more reason that he should have gone for Smith, who hadn't a palm tree to climb."

"Smith!" cried the Brixtonian Myers. "Was Smith there?" He felt a certain pride that Smith of Brixton had also trodden the ways of Darkest Africa. "What was he doing there?"

Paget looked at him pityingly. "My

dear young man," he said, "haven't you heard this lady"—he indicated Miss Binns—"grow eloquent over the fact that meat was soaring? If this so disturbs her, how much more does it terrify Smith?"

"I am afraid," said Mrs. Dean, "that I don't understand."

"It's perfectly simple," he answered suavely. "What with meat trusts and American beef barons and Upton Sinclair, only the wealthy will be able to afford meat. Smith spoke on the subject recently at a conference at Lambeth Palace. The time was coming, he said, when the Sunday dinner of the middle classes would be the watchdog filched from a neighbor's kennel. Smith loves dogs and wants to avoid this contingency. He has organized an immense herd of cattle in Mashonaland and was attending strictly to business when the lion treed the priest. Smith behaved with great bravery. Fearing to move lest the lion's attention should be attracted, he stood there like a statue for three hours. Finally, I shot the lion, rescued the Father and made Smith my lifelong friend."

"It seems incredible," exclaimed a timid boarder, who was making notes of this incident on his menu.

"But what were you doing in Africa?" Myers seemed to have a detective instinct.

"I was with Smith," said Paget. "I have repeatedly asserted my friendliness toward Smith. When I learned that he was to make this perilous journey protected only by native servants, a good conscience and a walking stick sword, I went with him. I don't see how in the name of friendship I could do anything else."

"But you said," objected Miss Binns, "that you made him your lifelong friend by shooting the lion."

"Madam," exclaimed Paget dramatically, "if you must know it, I was engaged by Mrs. Smith to follow him unbeknown and rescue him from possible dangers. Until I clasped him by the hand at the side of the dead lion Smith had never heard my voice, although I had followed him for three

months. He was inclined to be suspicious of me and to doubt my good faith at first. But when he saw me go up the palm tree and rescue Trevenose—

"Rescue!" ejaculated Miss Binns. "Wasn't the lion dead?"

"Don't you know," said Paget, speaking as to a small and stupid child, "that some people can climb up but dare not come down? There was the pest at the top of an enormously tall tree and afraid to look down for fear of vertigo. Smith couldn't climb. The natives were afraid of the evil eye, they said, so I had to go. There was only one way to get him down, and that was to beat him into submission. Trevenose has never forgiven me. He admits he couldn't get down, but he says I was too rough. And that's why, Mrs. Dean," he said, turning to his landlady, "Father Trevenose won't speak as enthusiastically of me as Smith will. And that's the reason also that his speeches don't go into that African trip of his."

The timid boarder who had scribbled on the menu broke in nervously.

"I occasionally contribute to the *Church News*," he said. "May I use that incident?"

Paget thought for a moment of his priggish brother, for whom he cherished a not too brotherly love. "By all means," he answered, stifling a smile. "I shall be most happy to give you additional details."

This complete readiness to vouch for a story which had a certain air of improbability about it reassured the entire table. Paget looked about him calmly to see what effect it had. For the first time he saw, or thought he saw, in the faded eyes of the affable old gentleman opposite a gleam of humor. Paget's heart warmed toward him. A minute later the ladies left the table, and, rising as they did so—an antic which seemed somewhat unnecessary to Myers—Paget saw among them one of the most beautiful girls he had ever chanced to cast eyes upon. He sat down and sipped his lifeless coffee with a frown. He was annoyed to think he had talked what he called drivel while

she was sitting silently listening, when he might have seen her and even spoken to her.

He could gain no very distinct impression in that half-minute, but she was tall, he noticed, carried herself regally and wore a gown of some soft, clinging, amber-colored material. Furthermore, her eyes and hair were dark, and there was a soft, rich color in her cheeks which made his heart beat faster as he thought of it. He opened his cigarette case with a vicious click and passed it across to the old gentleman, who hesitated a moment. "Do you prefer a cigar?" Paget asked, feeling in his pocket for a case. A smile of contentment wreathed the old man around as he enjoyed the aroma of a cigar which was the favorite brand of Lord St. Vian. He was poor, unfortunate and almost hopeless, and this took him back to a time when he had been rich. He presently forgot these two young men and heard nothing of their conversation.

Myers, who was given to the wearing of too much jewelry, was not, as Paget saw, bad-looking. He was what, for lack of a better phrase, is termed bad form in the set among which Mountcastle had moved. He was watching Paget through half-closed eyes.

"What do you think of her?" he demanded presently.

"What do I think of whom?" answered the other.

"The girl in yellow. Isn't she a winner!"

"She seemed to me attractive," returned Paget, a trifle stiffly.

"Attractive!" Myers smiled in derision. "My boy, do you know that girl moves in a society you and I would give something to go in!"

Paget lit another cigarette before answering. "How do you know?" he asked.

"I've made it my business to," he said slyly. "She's an American. Her people come from New Orleans. Her father's a cotton millionaire, or was. From what I hear, he's lost some of his money in New York, but she needn't

live in a Bloomsbury boarding house like the rest of us."

"Why does she then?" he was asked.

"Her aunt is studying something at the British Museum and is living here for a time because it's convenient."

"You seem to know all about them," said Paget.

"I do," returned Myers; "and I've had trouble because they're exclusive."

Paget smiled unkindly. "They've snubbed you then?"

"They haven't had the chance," retorted Myers. "I don't know them yet, but I shall."

Paget affected a lack of interest. "Indeed!"

"You didn't see where she was sitting, did you?" asked the other.

"Somewhere behind me, wasn't it?"

"There's a little table there," said Myers, "which holds three, Miss Lloyd—that's her name—Miss Scott, her aunt, and a fusty old clergyman, who has been working at the Museum. He leaves tomorrow." Myers laid stress on the day. He seemed to swell with triumph. "So, my boy," he added, "I shall be the Johnny on the spot there, as the Americans say."

Three times since he had known Myers Paget had been called "my boy," and it was a form of address he did not like. Furthermore, there was a condescending air that had made Myers disliked by everyone in the establishment, particularly the gentle, blue-eyed old man who sat opposite still puffing at the Havana.

Myers rose to his feet and laid an arm on Paget's sleeve with an air he considered at once bold and careless. "You understand," he said.

"My good young man," said Paget, "you probably don't mean to be offensive, but nature has triumphed over your desires, and I imagine that if you seek to supplant what you call a 'fusty old clergyman'—"

The silent smoker looked up indignantly. He had come back to earth again and was wondering how he could pay Mrs. Dean when this fell on his ears.

"Fusty, indeed!" he snorted. "Why, sir, Dr. Bond is a Fellow of Merton and University Professor of Sanskrit. Most estimable man, indeed." He glowered at Myers for a moment, but his look of annoyance speedily vanished. He had the misfortune to owe a trifling sum to him, and the wherewithal to repay was not at hand.

"So I imagined from his face," said Paget urbanely. "Mr. Myers here rather fancies himself in the role of a lady killer. He has stage-managed the thing already. How much did you tip the waiter?" he asked suddenly.

Myers colored.

"Ask Smith," he said rudely, and swaggered from the room.

Paget looked after him, a trifle amused, and turned to the old gentleman with a smile. "Doesn't seem to care for me," he hazarded.

"He cares only for himself," snapped the other. "I have lived for many years in boarding houses, and it has always been my lot to meet men of his uneducated, intolerable type. He is the worst of all."

Then the look of anger faded from the old man's eyes. "Of course," he added apologetically, "I am old and unversed in modern ways. It may be I am unjust."

With a few words of farewell he passed from the room and Paget could not but notice that his dinner coat was very worn and shiny. He had never before been intimately brought in contact with genteel poverty and it made him thoughtful. He was roused from this mood by Myers, who came back arrayed in a startling smoking jacket.

"Look here, old man," he commenced easily, "I didn't mean to say anything to hurt your feelings."

"Thank you," returned Paget. "I was not deeply wounded."

"All I meant to say," said Myers, "was that I threw over my best girl for Miss Lloyd, and I don't want you to interfere."

"Really," cried Paget, "one would think I was a rival in your affections. I have seen this lady only once and shall

not be very much disturbed if I never set eyes on her again."

"That's settled," Myers replied complacently. He lit a cigar with a flaming band upon it which he did not remove. "I don't know her yet, but when I sit next to her she can't very well avoid me, can she?" he demanded anxiously.

"Why should she want to?" said Paget.

"That's the very point," said Myers. "Now I happen to know that the person sitting next to her leaves tomorrow. There'll be a vacant seat. I shall just move across there and sit down. She can't say anything, and I'm too good a boarder for Mrs. Dean to want to offend. You see," he continued meditatively, "what women like is boldness in things like that. Ever seen Kyrle Bellew or Lewis Waller?"

"Yes," said the other. "Why?"

"Theirs is the kind of way that fetches the girls." Myers had taken Paget's attitude for one of great and respectful interest. "Some people," added the ingenuous Myers, "think me very much like what Bellew used to be."

"And you think," said Paget, "that because of what you've told me I am not to occupy the seat next that pretty American girl?"

"That's what I meant," said Myers, not knowing how Paget was taking it. "I gave up my best girl in Camden Town because of Miss Lloyd."

"If you'll give me the young lady's Camden Town address," said Paget, "I will write congratulating her on her escape from a damned little cad."

"What!" cried Myers. "From me?"

"How quick you are!" returned Paget. "Yes, I mean on her escape from you."

"I won't be spoken to like this!" cried Myers, with an affectation of the fierceness he wished he could feel. There was something rather frightening in the cold look which the other bent upon him.

"You're no gentleman," said Myers with dignity.

"You are," returned Paget. "Now,

as both of us have perjured ourselves, let me tell you that I shall not admit that you have any claim upon this Miss Lloyd, and, furthermore, I shall sit at that vacant chair tomorrow night, unless, of course, she or her aunt asks me not to do so. I'd do it to protect her from you, even if she were as ugly as Miss Binns."

Myers jingled some loose change in his pocket ostentatiously.

"You don't own this place," he said at last, when he saw Paget preparing to leave the room. By this time Paget was a little ashamed of his outburst.

He turned to Myers less angrily. "You'd be wiser," he said, "if you aspired less high. From what little I have seen of Miss Lloyd I should say you would have better luck in Camden Town."

Paget was not at home at luncheon the next day, but remembering his vow to supplant Myers, came to the boarding house in time to dress for dinner. He had inquired which was Myers's room, and when that young man had betaken himself to it Paget produced a gimlet and screwdriver from his pocket, together with a long screw. Then, being skilled in such matters, since "screwing in" has been a practical joke played upon unpopular tutors and masters at universities and schools for many generations, Paget silently fastened Myers's door and went down to dinner.

He was early, and there were not many of the guests in the room, but Miss Lloyd and her aunt were sitting at the little table where was one vacant seat.

The girl looked up as he entered the room.

"Here's that new man with the gift for romance," she said.

He made his way to their table and bowed.

"If I may," he said, "and this table has not been engaged for any friend of yours, I should like to sit here. I find it less trying to sit with my back to the light."

There was a glaring light over the central table, and Miss Scott, who was

never disinclined to converse with strangers, smiled graciously.

"That's the very reason," she said, "that we sit here."

Nina Lloyd bowed very slightly. Paget was the last man she would accuse of eye trouble. Without being vain, she was perfectly well aware of her charms, and this was not the first time men had made excuses to be near her. Indeed, it was a tribute on which she had come to look as inevitable. But she had to acknowledge that this newcomer was one of the most imperturbably cool beings she had ever met. She had been an interested listener to his African adventures, and although Miss Scott, whose hobby was ecclesiastical lace and vestments of the sixteenth century, had believed in him firmly, her niece had other opinions.

Paget, as soon as he had the opportunity, looked at the girl and was lost in astonishment that Myers, vulgar, ill educated and unused to the conventions of polite society, should have ventured to cast aspiring eyes at this beautiful girl. She was charmingly gowned, in a dull red costume which looked simple enough to his masculine eye, but which a woman would have known owed its simplicity to the dressmaking art which conceals art.

"I've always found," he said urbanely, addressing Miss Scott, "that in places like this, one never gets properly introduced. My name is Paget. I already have the advantage of knowing yours." His bow embraced the two women.

"Who told you?" demanded the girl suddenly.

"Mr. Myers," he answered.

Her voice was fascinating, he thought. Used to believing that all American girls were possessed of a curious twang, such as he had heard from time to time from the lips of certain parties of young women, who, by the votes of their friends and the generosity of newspapers, toured Europe as the most beautiful or most popular girls in their localities, he was charmed to hear Miss Lloyd. That curious, delicious, haunting inflection of the New Orleans woman of the better class had an instant at-

traction for him. He looked at her with growing interest. Her profile, delicate, pure, reminded him of a picture he had seen by Leonardo da Vinci. She was watching Adolf, the Swiss waiter.

"He seems terribly agitated," she observed. "He's usually as placid as an ox." She turned to Paget. "Have you been doing anything to him, Mr. Paget?"

"I?" he cried. "Perish the thought!"

But plainly it was at him that the waiter's eyes were leveled. He came toward Paget apologetically.

"I do not think," he said in his broken way, "that you like to sit here."

"Therein you are in error," said Paget. "I like it too well to leave."

Adolf muttered to himself and retired. He had an understanding with Myers that the vacant seat should be reserved for him for a certain monetary consideration. Dinner was half through when Adolf was beckoned from the room by some unseen person. Presently he returned and made his way to the side of Mrs. Dean. It was evident that she was anxious, and the name of Myers was heard. Nina Lloyd detected a smile on Paget's face. She also remembered seeing Myers give Adolf some money that morning, and she knew that Myers was desperately anxious to be introduced.

"Can you imagine what can be the matter with Mr. Myers?" she asked of him.

"I know him so little," Paget returned innocently, "that I could hardly guess."

The dessert was already placed upon the table when Myers entered the room. He walked to Paget's table and scowled.

"You did it," he said in a low voice not easily heard by boarders at the big table.

Miss Scott looked at him amazed.

"Who did what?" she asked.

"We had a bet," said Myers, "and to prevent my winning he prevented my getting out of my room. There isn't a bell, and I might have stayed

there all night but for the cook hearing me shouting through the window."

The girl looked at Paget suspiciously. "What bet was it?" she asked.

Myers, thoroughly angry, threw caution and truth to the winds.

"He said he'd sit here, even if you were as ugly as Miss Binns. I'll get even with him."

Myers took his accustomed seat staring at the few people remaining in the room.

Nina Lloyd looked steadily at Paget. "Is it true?" she demanded.

"Not as he says it." Paget could see that she was not pleased at the incident.

"But did you," she persisted, "tell him that you would sit here just because he wanted to?"

He made a gesture of despair. "Yes."

"My dear," said the girl's aunt, "it really doesn't matter, does it? One boarder is so very like another." This was her thrust at him.

"I detest that sort of thing," said the girl icily.

"You shouldn't take it so seriously," he replied.

"Is it a pleasant thing?" she asked. "Ought I to be happy that these horrid women like Miss Binns have something to gossip over concerning me?"

"I always rise superior to the Binnses of the world," he said. "I sat next Miss Binns last night and I determined to escape. Do you blame me?"

"Not in the least," she answered. "But I wish you had not chosen to escape here."

"It can be remedied easily enough," he said, flushing.

She looked across the table at Myers. There was now nobody left in the room except the three at the little table.

"Mr. Myers," she said, "if you want to sit here tomorrow night there will be a vacant chair."

Myers flashed back a glance of triumph at Paget as he answered.

"Nothing will keep me from it," he said.

Nina Lloyd had hoped that this lesson would make Paget uncomfortable, but he had recovered his *sang froid*.

"I shall never believe in the refining influence of love any more," he said. "Myers is terribly smitten with you and it makes him unbearable."

"I really can't think why you should interfere," said Miss Lloyd cuttingly.

"I always interfere," he answered.

"I have always interfered in everything. All sensible men do. I interfered in that cub's affairs not because I wanted particularly to thwart him, but because I was sorry for you."

"Sorry?" she repeated.

"Sorry," he answered. "Try as you will, you cannot tell me honestly that you would like his company here."

"Preferring yours, then?" She laughed. "Really, Mr. Paget, you are the most conceited man I have met for a long time."

"I cultivate it," he said. "Most people deny it. I don't. It makes me all the honester, you'll admit. Honestly, Miss Lloyd, whenever I go to a dance or a reception or any social function I try to dance, or talk to, or take in to dinner, the prettiest girl. It makes me so much pleasanter if I do this, and to be pleasant is to be an oasis in a desert of dullness. It's a sort of religion with me."

"I don't see," she said, with a return of her formal manner, "that this has anything to do with the case."

"Never mind; I shall always consider that I have gone down to a glorious defeat. Myers hasn't defeated me; it was you. I could wish," he added with a smile, "that you weren't quite so *difficile*. You loathe Myers personally, and yet you ask him to sit at your table."

She rose to her feet and put the silk wrap about Miss Scott's neck without answering.

"You asked him to sit by your side and talk," he insisted.

The girl smiled. "If you remember exactly what I said, you will find that I did nothing of the kind."

III

ALTHOUGH Paget knew London well from frequent residence at Trevenose House at the corner of Brook Street and

Park Lane, the great Western Central district was utterly unknown. He had passed through it often enough on his way to the great railway terminals in the Euston Road, but these quiet squares and gardens, once the home of the wealthy merchant class and now given over to the homes of authors, actors and boarding-house keepers were new to him. It was only a little past ten o'clock when he left Myers, and an hour's stroll seemed attractive. Slipping on a light coat and the silk hat of convention he made his way through streets that were wrapped in quiet respectability. But they seemed so much alike that presently he was unable to find his way back. A policeman standing at a corner told him he was in Woburn Place and gave him directions. At the corner of Tavistock Place he paused to light a cigarette, and an inebriated man observing him proffered a lifelong friendship. He wept when it was not received and pursued his uneven way along streets that were mountainous and houses that moved.

There were few people abroad; the only sound that Paget heard as he took his leisurely way homeward was the pit-pat of someone wearing light shoes who was walking in the same direction he was pursuing. He glanced over his shoulder to see a girl holding a letter in her hand and pausing irresolute at the corner of the street he had just passed. He conjectured that she was looking for a pillar post, and would have thought no more of it had not another woman appeared upon the scene. Under the light Paget could see that she had been drinking. He noticed, too, that she was dressed in the tinsel finery of her class and every few moments broke out into filthy invective.

As she came to the street corner she saw the girl under the lamp, who shrank involuntarily from such close proximity. This action of repugnance only served to infuriate the woman, for with an oath she snatched the letter and attempted to run away. Very quickly the girl recovered it, only to be pursued by the other, who upbraided her foully.

From his position in the shadow Paget saw that the two were being approached by a policeman wearing the rubber-soled shoes which made his approach noiseless.

"What's all this about?" he demanded gruffly.

"This here thing what calls herself a lady tried to snatch my purse," said she of the gaudy garments shrilly. "Strike me, if she didn't!"

"It is untrue!" cried the girl. And Paget recognized instantly the voice of Nina Lloyd. "It is untrue," she repeated. "I was looking for the post office when this woman snatched my letter from me."

"Oh, you liar!" shrieked she of the streets and fled clumsily into the night. The constable looked after her dubiously.

"What did you do to her?" he demanded suspiciously of Miss Lloyd.

"I've already told you," said the girl angrily. "I wanted to find the post office and that woman took my letter. You should have arrested her."

The constable scowled in answer. "I don't want your advice," he said. "There's more in this than you're telling."

She stamped her foot with impatience.

"Will you tell me where the post office is?"

"You can post that letter at the station house," he said. "Come quietly."

For a moment the girl seemed hardly to understand him; then, in a flash, she saw her position and tried to temporize.

"But I have done nothing," she cried, white-faced, "nothing at all!"

He took out a notebook with elaborate importance.

"'Brawling in the public streets' is how it will read on the charge sheet," he said. "That's good enough for me."

"You are making a mistake," she said; "and I shall use my influence to have you reprimanded."

"Come and do it," he said, taking her arm firmly.

Paget had waited in the hope that

she might be able to pacify the constable and escape the knowledge that he had witnessed so unpleasant a scene. But it was obvious that without some assistance the affair was likely to prove serious. He moved toward the policeman.

"I think, Sergeant," he said with ready tact, since the man had not won his chevrons, "that you are making a mistake. I saw the whole thing and can swear that this lady was in no way to blame."

The man was proof against any flattery and smiled unpleasantly.

"What, another of 'em?" he asked. "You know her, too?" He turned to the terrified girl. "Come along!"

"This won't do," muttered Paget. He took a sovereign from his pocket and endeavored to slip it into the man's hand; but whether the officer thought it only a shilling, or his ill-temper rendered him impervious to golden gains, he refused it angrily.

"Let go my hand," he shouted.

"But I can explain," said Paget anxiously.

"Will you take your hand off my arm?" cried the other.

"If you'll only listen to reason," said the girl.

Without a word the man drew his whistle. Paget knew that, were it blown, in a minute or two a dozen constables would be running toward them, and what explanations could be made would be given in a police station or, worse, in a police court. Paget was a man who thought and acted quickly. Before the whistle could be lifted to its owner's lips it was snatched from him with such force that the chain attaching it to his coat was broken. Almost with the same action it was flung over the high iron railings into the gardens of the square. A moment later the officer, floored by a wrestler's trick, fell heavily to the ground, his helmet was rammed with all his opponent's strength over his head and he groped blindly about the gutter.

When he had recovered himself sufficiently to extricate his head from the helmet, the man and girl were well

on their way running toward Marchmont Street.

"I hope you can keep this up for a bit," whispered Paget, gripping the girl's arm. "If we can only get around some convenient corner it will be all right."

"I can do it," she answered cheerfully.

He checked her speed a few yards from the corner. "There may be another constable there," he told her. "If he sees us running he may arrest us as suspicious characters."

There was, indeed, a policeman standing chaffing a cabman, but he did not even glance at the two. In the distance the thud of the rubber-shod constable was heard.

"I can hear him!" said the girl.

Paget looked down at her doubtfully. He dreaded hysterics. He felt that they were in a nasty predicament from which they could only have a chance to escape if she kept her nerve. John Paget under magisterial cross-examination would not cut a very good figure. Incidentally, he knew that assaulting a police officer in the execution of his duty was a serious offense. Nina Lloyd smiled with great calmness, thereby relieving him immeasurably.

"Your African adventures have given me great confidence in you. How are you going to rescue me?"

"By keeping cheerful and trusting to luck," he said. "That's the only way."

They were walking quickly, afraid to run lest the attention of the constable talking to the cabman should be drawn to them. Paget had noticed that he was tall and slim and promised speed. A few yards brought them to a meeting of the ways. One road kept on under glaring street lamps, while the other, crescent-shaped, offered greater security. Into this sheltered road they turned and commenced again to run. Halfway along the crescent a road ran to the left. To continue the crescent road would only mean that they would again reach the main street.

"We'd better try this," suggested the girl.

Before they could slacken their speed

they had passed a young man and a girl talking in the shadow of an alleyway. The young man appeared to be much interested. "What's up?" he cried good-naturedly. "Coppers after yer?"

"A fire," said Paget with commendable promptness, "a terrific blaze!"

"Where?" the young man instantly demanded.

"At Maple's," Miss Lloyd cried, perceiving his hesitancy and naming the great furniture store hard by.

"I work there," said the young man, with some show of excitement. "Come on!" he cried to his companion. They disappeared down a flight of stone steps to the right.

"I can hear the men coming," said Nina, grasping Paget's arm. "We'd better not follow that man and girl."

He looked quickly about him and drew her down another of the quiet roads of Bloomsbury. A hundred yards showed that it was a *cul de sac*. Under the light at its other end the heavy form of the assaulted constable flashed past. He had seen the fire-seeking couple and was gaining on them.

"We must get out of this," said Paget, "before he finds he has drawn a blank."

"But the other policeman," she objected. "He knows about us now."

"But he didn't look at us," said Paget. "I don't see anything for it but to retrace our steps. He may not even have been warned. The other chap will certainly be back in a minute or so."

They retraced their steps, and glancing cautiously round the corner found that the tall, slim officer had been reinforced by another. Rapidly Paget took off the overcoat he was wearing and threw it over the railings into the gardens of Burton Crescent, where, with a prayer of gratitude for mercies unexpected, the gardener found it next morning.

"Give me your cloak," he said. "I won't throw it away, but I'll put it over my arm. For all we know, your policeman may have left descriptions of our clothes." Then he took her

arm. "I'm sorry," he said, "but this is the only way I can think of just now."

The constables looked sharply at the pair as they passed. They saw merely a young man who was slightly the worse for drink. He was neither incapable nor disorderly, so they had no claim upon him. The slim constable had recently been married, and seeing instantly that Miss Lloyd was a lady and therefore not the person vividly described by the irate officer, grew virtuously bitter at the way some men treated their wives.

His companion, a benedick of twenty years, had long since ceased this manner of thought and interrupted him impatiently. "After they got him down and kicked him in the nose, what did they do?" he demanded.

Paget, not out of earshot, chuckled.

"We are supposed to have broken his nose," he laughed. "We—you are included, too. He'll probably swear that you held him down while I did it."

"I shan't back out of it," she said, more seriously.

"I think we're all right now," he answered. "I don't know how to go home from here, but we're bound to meet a hansom soon."

At this moment the first constable returned from his false trail and came upon the two brother officers.

"Did you see them?" he gasped.

"No—only a drunk feller and a girl."

The elder policeman stamped his foot with rage. "Why didn't you hold them?" he cried. "Ten to one it's them. The pair I chased said they were talking to them not ten seconds before I came up. Hurry up! Hurry up!"

The slim officer set off in pursuit. He had seen which way the twain had gone. So it was that when the girl commenced to thank her companion for his help she looked back at the rapid footsteps and beheld the officer racing toward her. Paget saw it an instant later.

"Run on as hard as you can," he said, "and wait for me around the first cor-

ner." He almost pushed her in his anxiety. "Run, run!" he repeated.

As the pursuing constable saw a fleeting figure he redoubled his efforts. When, therefore, he encountered Paget's foot thrust suddenly forward from the shelter of a doorway, he fell to the ground with a thud and remained motionless. For a moment his assailant feared that his silence might be that of death; but it was no time for first aid to the injured, and he sprinted after the girl who was waiting for him.

"I couldn't go any further," she gasped; "I lost a slipper."

"Never mind," he said cheerily, "there's always some way out of it."

But he looked very anxious as he took his bearings.

It was not yet time for the theater hansoms to be returning. Between ten and eleven Bloomsbury is very quiet. A drizzling rain was falling and few people were in the streets. For a moment the idea of entering a house came to his mind, but there were sounds as of men talking excitedly together which made him determined to act quickly. Before him were the iron railings of Bloomsbury Square. Inside, tall horse chestnuts, their leaves newly unfolded, revealed through their yet uncovered lower limbs dense shrubberies beyond through which no police lantern could pierce. "Here's our only hope," he said. "If I get you onto the top of the railings jump as far as you can. I'll follow."

The girl jumped as she was bid and landed in a bed of yellow calceolarias. Paget, following, was less fortunate and was embraced by thorny bushes, but they were barely sheltered when the two assaulted officers swung round the corner.

"Will they shoot?" demanded the girl. She had seen New York policemen shoot and was now thoroughly frightened.

"They haven't got revolvers," he whispered. "I'm glad of it. Paternal government won't allow it. Don't be frightened. They'll never suspect us. Not many girls could have got over as

neatly as you. "He looked at her with a very genuine admiration. "I prophesy that you will go down in police records as one of the boldest and most relentless criminals of modern times."

"I shudder to think where I should be if it had not been for you," she said gratefully. "What are we to do now?"

"Walk across this garden, climb the railings—and home."

"I dread that climbing," she said.

But it was not so difficult this time. A friendly ladder found in the gardener's shed eased the operation and they descended into a street which seemed to be unpatrolled by the police. There were still no hansoms in sight, an unusual piece of ill luck, since these gondolas of the London streets are ordinarily ubiquitous.

The girl, feeling that her tribulations were over, began to thank him.

"Not till we're out of the wood," he said a little gravely.

"I thought we were," she said. "This is the terrace of houses our boarding house is in, isn't it?"

"I don't know a bit," he said. "To tell you the truth, I never asked Mrs. Dean for the address. I was driving by and the house seemed attractive. The only way for me to recognize it is by a prodigiously tall ladder leaning against the rear of the end house."

She pointed to something seen indistinctly in the misty night, and clapped her hands. "Hurrah!" she cried. "There's your ladder, Mr. Paget! Yes, that's the end house, and we live thirty-four houses along, or rather seventeen, for the houses are numbered alternately. That lamp is outside—"

"What is it?" he demanded, as she broke off abruptly.

"Look!" she said. "Are those policemen outside our house?"

He pulled her back into the shadows and peered anxiously. "You're right," he announced gravely. "There seem to be a number. Of course they may not be after us. London isn't the biggest city of the world without having all sorts of police affairs every night. The odds are they are after someone else."

"And if they're not—" she asked.

"They thirst for our blood," he said.

There was a note of anxiety in her voice which he had not heard before when she said: "Mr. Paget, things of this sort—accidents and adventures, I mean—are sometimes what we call 'squared' on the other side. Can't we square this?"

He shook his head. "I doubt it," he said. "The London policeman hasn't any such chances as the New York or Chicago men have. Take it all round, they won't accept bribes. There is no political pull here in police matters."

"If we are caught, what will be done? Please tell me truthfully. It's rather serious, isn't it?"

"Oh, not very," he said easily. "Happens every day somewhere or other."

"Not what we've been doing," she said.

"But you haven't been doing anything," he said smiling.

"Assaulting the police is very serious," she corrected. "We assaulted two."

"You didn't," he said. "I assaulted two of them. If caught, which is unlikely, I may get fined forty shillings and costs or in default ten days' imprisonment. It is comforting to think that I have the necessary sum saved up."

"Do you think I should let you take the blame when it was my fault?" she said indignantly.

"I hope you would," he returned. "It wouldn't mean much for a man. There would be the usual little magisterial lecture about disgracing parents and that sort of thing. Perhaps a few lines in the papers and then oblivion. I know," he added with a smile. "I was run in one boat-race night for singing in public places. I was dismissed with a caution. Now with you it would be different. I can see it in all the papers: 'Beautiful American Girl Assaults Police.' You'd never get over it. A man has the inalienable right to play the fool by night, but a woman is judged differently."

"Yes, I know," she replied. "It's

horrible to think about, but what are we to do?" she cried despairingly.

"It's quiet on this doorstep," he said, "and policeless so far as I can see. We'd better wait a bit and see when those men are going to move."

There was silence for a few moments. Suddenly she laid her hand on his arm. "I've a splendid idea!" she cried. "A certain escape, and all owing to my mania for ventilation!"

"You are going too fast for me," he said.

"At the top of the house," she responded, "there is a big room where trunks are stored. I have two big ones there that won't go in the bedroom. I went up this morning to get a dress out." She looked down upon the pretty frock that could never be worn again. "It was so stuffy that I pried open the skylight and forgot to shut it. The room is rarely used and probably the light is open still."

"The ladder!" he cried. "It's an inspiration!"

Towering aloft into the darkness, the climb up the side of the somber old house of five stories would have daunted most girls. Nina Lloyd treated it with profound unconcern. It was the way of salvation.

"I wish you would go first," she said. "I don't mind the climbing, but I may be a little nervous about getting from the ladder to the roof."

When the roof was gained it was not easy work climbing the brick parapets which divided the houses. Some householders had pots of flowers, which met disaster at the hands of the invaders, and one small boy wept bitterly next day to find that the rabbits he kept in a hutch had got loose and three of them come to a violent end.

They counted seventeen houses, and after a while found the skylight still open. The girl professed to remember that the drop to the floor was not very great, and Paget essayed to lower himself down. This was safely accomplished, and when the girl swung herself down he was able to stand upon a chair and save her the jar the drop had caused him.

He lit a match and finding a gas jet looked about him curiously.

The girl made a quick exclamation of dismay.

"This isn't the house at all!" she cried.

It was certainly no room for the storage of baggage. Plainly it was a child's playroom, for grouped about in picturesque untidiness were toys of all descriptions.

The girl threw herself into a low rocking chair and laughed softly. "Mr. Paget," she said, "I am resigned to anything. The ladder was my inspiration. It's your turn for an inspiration now."

He looked at the skylight. "I prefer aspiration," he replied, "but we can't possibly climb out. It isn't late enough to be taken for burglars." He looked at his watch. "Only just half past eleven. We must descend."

The stairs were well carpeted and two flights were safely negotiated when sounds of voices fell on the silence.

The stairs at this point were brilliantly illuminated, and before retreat could be made a door opened and an elderly man came upon them. He was nonplused for the moment.

"Well," he said, "and what's the meaning of this?"

Paget's quick eye had discerned the stethoscope protruding slightly from his pocket.

"The fact is, Doctor," he exclaimed ingenuously, "we need your professional advice. I dropped in to see you."

"What were you doing up there?" He pointed to the stairway.

"You were not there so we came to find you." Paget was aware that his story went haltingly, but his face gave no evidence of it. "I have a three-inch cut on my head." He turned to the light and for the first time the girl saw that his collar at the back was blood-stained. "By the way," he demanded, "how many stitches go to the inch?"

"That is a matter for the police surgeon," said the old man. "I am merely a consulting physician."

The girl started at the ominous word

"police" and the doctor gazed at her keenly.

"You don't like the word 'police,' then?" he demanded.

"I loathe it," she said.

"From a small child she has always dreaded it," said her companion promptly. "I could never understand it."

"Well, sir," cried the old doctor, "we shall see whether you share the same dread." He turned to the girl and looked at her for a moment. "Your friend here," he said, indicating Paget, "is plainly a criminal. That you should be one, too, is probably not your fault." He sighed. "The victim, I judge, of a bad heredity. Don't attempt to escape, either of you."

"We shouldn't dream of it," Paget assured him. "I need a tonic badly. Even consulting physicians won't deny me that."

The old man opened the door of the room from which he had come.

"Father," he called, "I should like your advice."

"Good heavens!" whispered Paget. "What a centenarian he must be!"

"Please don't say anything more," whispered the girl softly. "I have such a desire to cry or laugh—I don't know which—that I'm afraid it's hysteria."

The doctor turned to them. "Come in here," he said severely.

They followed him into what was obviously his consulting room. There were strange instruments under glass cases and many dismal-looking books. All these the girl observed quickly; but her eye rested for a longer time on an unusually tall, thin, ascetic young man with a large aquiline nose and marked chin who was dressed as an Anglican priest. He looked at her with a cold, sexless gaze and then at her companion with more interest. His look changed to one of such blank consternation that the girl turned to Paget, who was in his turn staring at this tall cleric with amazement.

And, indeed, to see his only brother in such curious circumstances was more than Lord St. Vian's eldest son could understand. Absolutely disinclined

for the sports and pleasures of the normal boy, and debarred by reason of ill health from the public school life of the Englishman of his class, Cyril Trevenose had grown up apart from his brother and with even less sympathy for his pursuits than had Viscount Mountcastle for what he termed the other's ecclesiastical vagaries. At Keble—for Cyril rebelled against the tradition which sent all the Trevenoses to Christ Church—he had developed into a Ritualist of the extremest sort. The Order of the Blessed Meditation which he had founded was made up of men of family and learning who had pledged themselves to celibacy. With what fortune he had inherited from his mother, Father Trevenose had endowed the Order and had of late been asking for more from his father to increase the endowment. For three years the brothers had not met, and a certain feeling of antagonism had grown up between them on account of this repeated request for large sums from the Earl of St. Vian.

"Father," said the old doctor with what neither Paget nor the girl failed to notice was extreme respect, "I have just captured these housebreakers. I confess that they puzzle me."

"Housebreakers!" repeated Trevenose in horror. His pride of race was deep seated and to think that the man who would succeed to the family title as the seventeenth earl was caught in anything dishonorable came as a profound shock. "Impossible!"

"Father," said Paget quickly, "may I speak with you privately for a few moments?" He turned to the old man. "You don't mind, Doctor?"

The doctor looked inquiringly at the churchman.

"You really needn't be alarmed," said Paget. "I'm the desperate one. The lady is perfectly harmless."

"I shall be glad if you will leave me with this gentleman," said Trevenose.

Nina Lloyd, at a loss to understand what was to be the outcome of this adventure, followed the old man docilely into an adjoining room, which was fitted up as a chemical laboratory.

Here, while they waited, she was regaled with an account of the fascinations of morbid pathology.

When they were alone Paget turned to his brother.

"Your doctor friend," he said, "is making a mistake which is perfectly excusable, but all the same a mistake. This lady narrowly escaped being arrested by a fool of a policeman because she lost her way and answered him sharply. She is a lady and has done nothing wrong."

"Do ladies habitually enter strange houses by night?" asked the other.

"Of course not," snapped his brother. "That's where the mistake was made. We thought this was the boarding house where she and her aunt live and we came through the wrong roof. On my honor, Cyril, she is no more a burglar than I am."

"What do you want me to do?" demanded the priest. His manner was not cordial.

"Guarantee us to the old chap who owns this house so that he will let us out without asking for police aid."

"It is not Dr. Brundage's house," said Trevenose. "It belongs to the Order."

"The Order?" said Paget incredulously. "What does the Order want with a big room filled with all sorts of toys?"

"This is our home for crippled children. Dr. Brundage is the medical superintendent."

Paget looked at him with interest. "By Jove, Cyril," he exclaimed, "I'd no idea you went in for that sort of thing! I thought you had ten services a day and delighted the hearts of vinegary virgins thereby."

"Did you ever try to find out?" demanded the priest.

"I'm afraid I didn't," Paget confessed. "How many children are there?"

"Twenty," said the other. "We have accommodation for no more." He sighed. "It has been my aim to establish a convalescent home at Boscombe, but we have not been able to do so."

"Money?" Paget asked. "Hard up?"

"That is the reason," admitted Trevenose.

"Tell me the truth, Cyril," said his brother. "That money you were always worrying the governor about, was it for this Boscombe Home?"

"We need such a place and I asked my father. He refused. I may be unjust, but I have always felt that you influenced him against me."

"I did," said Paget. "I thought you were quite different people. I'm sorry. Do you know, Cyril," he continued with a smile, "perhaps you are not such a bad chap after all. Will you vouch to Brundage for us and let us escape?"

"Assuredly," said Trevenose, "I can take your word that you have done nothing wrong."

Paget fidgeted uneasily for a moment.

"Look here, my dear chap," he said at length, "perhaps we are not so innocent after all. Receive this confidence under the seal of confession."

The priest listened attentively to the story of the night's adventures. "It is unfortunate," he said. "But I don't think a Trevenose could have done differently." He reflected a moment. "But how are you to get the young lady home?"

"We'll drive by the boarding house in a hansom," said Paget, "and if all's clear we'll go in. If not, well, we seek more adventures. And, by the way, Cyril," he said with elaborate unconcern, "Miss Lloyd knows me only as John Paget, so don't introduce me to Brundage."

"I like that part of the story least of all," said his brother. "Surely—"

"Father has consented, Cyril. The fact is Milly and I aren't engaged any longer. She fell in love with Ganton, of the D. C. L. I., while I was in India. You remember Ganton, who won the Grand National on Grey Wolf last year?"

"That is hardly a good way to bring him to my mind," said the other.

"Well, the long and short of it is that they're to be married. I'm glad. Don't think my smiling face covers an

aching heart. I was never fitter, but I had an odd fancy, as you'll think it, to be plain John Paget for a time; and if I get captured tonight no one will be any the wiser. My dear chap, don't look so grieved. I'm not sowing wild oats. I shall probably soon tire of this life, but I am more anxious about getting this girl home than anything else. If you've a man who can whistle for a hansom I'd be obliged."

"I've never been able to understand you," said Trevenose. "You always do surprising things that have a touch of the irrational in them." He sighed again.

"Don't sigh," said Paget. "Few things depress me more. By the way," he continued, "are you still keen on this convalescent home scheme?"

"It fills my mind," answered the other.

"Build it, then," said Paget. "Build it as big as you want and it will be paid for. Now you can't say I bribed you to let me go."

Father Cyril took his brother's outstretched hand. Not for many years had they felt so kindly to one another.

Dr. Brundage asked for no explanation when Father Trevenose told him to accompany Miss Lloyd and Paget to the door. The Father was an arbitrary man and his strong personality had dominated the old doctor to a remarkable degree.

"But why take a hansom when we are only a few houses away?" demanded Nina, when in response to the whistle a cab dashed up.

"Because, to our shame," he answered, "this isn't the terrace where we live. The ladder we climbed isn't our ladder. The skylight you opened is half a mile away. Local topography isn't our strong point."

There were no policemen in sight when the cab reached the boarding house. "I wonder what my aunt will think of me?" said the girl as Paget turned up the gas in the hall and she beheld her ruined raiment. "Or of you if she sees you? Your hand is bleeding, and I forgot about your head entirely. How selfish of me!" She bent over him

and almost shrieked. "Why, it's a horrible cut! I thought you were joking when you told Dr. Brundage."

"It doesn't hurt a bit," he said. "I did it in the square garden, on the edge of a hoe. In fact, I landed that way."

"But what will you do?" she cried.

"Go out and find a doctor." He smiled and held out his hand. "You ought to run off to bed and sleep all day tomorrow."

"I shall," she yawned. "I feel bruised all over. But, Mr. Paget," she added very seriously, "I shall never feel grateful enough to you for what you did tonight. I'm not able to tell you how grateful I am."

There were men—she had known *some*—who would have seized upon the intimacy which the events of the night had forced upon them to enforce by some subtle suggestion a continuance of it. It was with a certain dread that she held out her hand and looked into his face. She saw admiration and friendliness and a certain hope that their acquaintance might progress, but nothing of the boldness with which she half feared to be met.

"I've enjoyed it immensely," he said, smiling. "I feel that I'm cut out for a reckless criminal; and one wouldn't want a pluckier companion. *Dormez bien.*"

She shut the door after him and then went slowly to her room. Miss Scott always retired early and usually left her niece reading in her own room, which was *en suite*. She was awakened from a pleasing slumber by the turning up of the gas.

"My child," she said agitatedly when her keen eyes fell upon the ruined dress, "my poor child, what has happened?"

The girl sat on the edge of the bed and smiled at her. "Nothing serious," she answered. "You remember Mr. Paget, whose African adventures remind one of Munchausen up to date?"

"Yes, yes," cried the other impatiently.

"He and I have been out together, and I wronged him by not being so credulous as you. Auntie, he's a most ex-

traordinary young man, and I believe every word of what he said at dinner last night."

"I must know everything," said Miss Scott excitedly.

"Not tonight," said the girl. "I'm too limp and bruised. Rouse thee, mine aunt, and get witch hazel and cold cream and sticking plaster and liniments."

She thrust out a little foot covered equally with silk hose and Bloomsbury mud.

"What would my father think if he knew that one slipper is treasured at Scotland Yard and the other will be found by a gardener in a square garden?"

Miss Scott, with hands that trembled, poured out some *sal volatile*. "Take this at once," she cried. "My dear, it must have been something very serious. I insist upon knowing."

Nina smiled and nodded her head. "Not tonight. But it wasn't serious."

Suddenly she put her hand to her bosom and drew out a letter. She looked at it curiously as though it were something she was seeing for the first time. "This is the most serious part of the whole thing," she said slowly. "This is the letter I went out to post. I wonder," she muttered, "if—"

"If what?" demanded her aunt, who was convinced that something out of the way was happening, something whose importance she could not fathom.

"I was wondering if Fate ever ordained things," said the girl more brightly. "I think we ordain things ourselves and blame Fate anyhow."

She tore the letter into very tiny pieces and then went to the window, limping as she went, and threw them out slowly, a few pieces here and there.

"It would take more than Sherlock Holmes to put that together again. All the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't," she laughed.

"My child," said the gray-haired aunt profoundly, "I don't know what you are talking about, but it sounds as though you had a secret."

"Dear lady," she said laughingly,

"could I have lived three and twenty years in this wicked world, New Orleans, my convent, New York, Paris and London, without having at least one teeny secret all to myself?"

Miss Scott took the torn stockings off carefully and bethed the aching feet with an affection that the girl's mother had never shown her. She was silent for some minutes.

"Ah," she sighed, "if you were only happy and married!"

"Happy and married!" echoed the girl. "It's a contradiction in terms. I have seen very little married happiness, I can assure you. You, for instance, are much happier than my mother. I think I shall take up some hobby like yours and spend my remaining days at libraries."

"But I was the ugly duckling of the family," said the elder. "If I had been tall and slim and beautiful like you I don't suppose I should have wanted to become an authority on ecclesiastical vestments and old lace." She assumed for the first time within her niece's recollection a tone that was almost disrespectful.

"Oh, auntie, treason!" said the girl reproachfully. "What would you have done if you hadn't taken them up?"

"If I had been made tall and straight like your mother or you, I should have dreamed other dreams."

The poor lady sighed again. Romance had never tarried with her. She looked at Nina almost shyly. "Don't you dream dreams, dear?"

"Nightmares, only nightmares," she said impatiently. She stooped suddenly and put her arms about her aunt's neck. "You belong to a kinder age," she said, "when people met together and read Dickens and thought Ruskin was the only authority on art, and there wasn't any higher criticism, and nobody tumbled idols from pedestals, and wives honored and obeyed their lords, and no Sunday evening was complete that didn't end up with badly sung hymns chanted in mournful unison by devout folk without sense of rhythm."

"They were happy days, after all," said Miss Scott stoutly. She had been

brought up in a typical New England home and had seen with much trepidation her beautiful sister, Nina's mother, marry one of the Louisiana Lloyds and leave the outer edge of the Brahmanical society of Boston for the gayer, more fascinating life of New Orleans.

"But I cannot laugh with Dickens," cried the girl. "Ruskin talks as the waters come down at Lodore; I have made mud pies of the clay feet of idols, and hymn tunes send me to sleep."

Miss Scott looked grave. She rose to her feet slowly and made her way to a medicine chest, from which she took a clinical thermometer.

"I am going to take," she said, "what you used as a child to call your 'temperament.' You are feverish."

IV

PAGET was aroused in the morning by the voice of Adolf, who begged to know if he were coming down to the lunch which would be served at one o'clock. With some difficulty he struggled into his clothes and made his way downstairs. He was early, for only Miss Scott was there. "How is Miss Lloyd?" he asked of her.

"I fear a bad cold," returned Miss Scott. "I have recommended her to stay in bed until after luncheon, when we have unfortunately a great deal to do."

Adolf came over to the new boarder, who had the appearance of an affluence which promised tips. "Cold mutton, sir, or cold beef?" he asked.

"I am lunching out," said Paget. "Whistle for a hansom, will you, please?" To the driver he said, "Drive me to a florist's."

At the florist's he purchased a great number of beautiful William Allen Richardson roses to be sent to Nina Lloyd. At first he thought of attaching his card to them and of making mention in some way only to be understood by the girl of the adventures of the night before. But finally he decided against this and they went to her with no indication of the sender.

From the florist's, a large glass-roofed store where everything was beautiful, he took his way to an institution which rarely failed to sadden him—a Turkish bath. In this gallery of the grotesque, this collection of gruesome caricatures of the human form divine, he spent several hours and returned to his boarding house, eased and refreshed, in time to dress for dinner.

When the gong rang he waited a few minutes and then slowly came to the large dining room. Myers, a red gardenia in his coat, was casting uneasy glances at the door. All the other guests were in their places. Between Miss Binns and the lady who lived on art, Paget sat down gloomily.

Miss Binns acknowledged his bow heavily. The artistic lady was more affable. "We are quite a small party tonight," she observed. "Mr. Danby has gone, Miss Smith and her uncle left for Brighton on the three-thirty and Miss Scott and Miss Lloyd cross the Channel tonight." She looked at the clock. "They should reach Ostend in an hour's time. I hope they have a good passage."

Paget was unkind enough to turn to Myers. Annoyed by the news, he could not resist glancing at the solitary diner, who had found, as he had been promised, a vacant chair.

Miss Binns suddenly looked up from her soup. "And Mr. Myers has gone, too, I suppose. I can't say that I ever liked him."

Someone tried to stay Miss Binns's tongue. By dumb show it was conveyed to her that he was sitting behind her. But Miss Binns never hedged or admitted defeat.

"I am glad that I can't see him," she said.

Myers was ready enough, as a rule, to take up any of her remarks and enjoyed a quarrel, but tonight he had no spirit left and before coffee retired from the room. Had poesy been his gift, another ode would have been added to the many which deal with the falsity of woman. Only he and Adolf knew of the magnum of champagne that was to have come in with the fish.

Paget looked round the table with the hope of discovering someone interesting. He was sorry that Miss James, his other neighbor, insisted on talking across the table and not to him. He felt that she must know definitely Nina Lloyd's destination and was determined to obtain it. He set himself to be amiable to her, but dinner was over before she thawed. Miss James had conceived him to be both flippant and untruthful. But she was woman enough to feel a species of elation when she saw him come into the drawing-room and elude the wide smile of the lady who wrote serial fiction and seat himself by her side.

It wanted but little effort for the crafty listener to lead her to old lace. Here, with the candor of one great soul to another, she admitted that Miss Scott was the greatest authority she knew upon such subjects. "Why," she declared with *empressment*, "Miss Scott is writing articles for a great American paper, the *Ladies' Home Magazine*, which will be brought out later in book form."

"Has she gone back to America?" Paget asked.

"Not yet," said the other. "She has gone abroad somewhere." Miss James smote her brow with impatience. "Dear me, I've forgotten the name. "It doesn't matter, but it's to some place on the Continent, either in Belgium or Brittany, I forget which, where there is a museum of old lace. Oh, I remember! It's Bruges!"

V

BRUGES, with the possible exception of Segovia, in Spain, bears more than any other European city the impress of medieval times. Very wisely the city authorities have decreed that no new buildings will be allowed erection which do not conform to the general architectural style of the city. The opportunity, therefore, of the bizarre or even the modern to break up the quiet charm of the town is not allowed; and the general result is one of peace

and quiet and antiquity. It was Paget's first visit to the capital of West Flanders, and he left his hotel not ashamed to be a student of his red guide and made his way to the church of Notre Dame, whose tall tower, higher than the famous belfry itself, dominates the city.

Adjoining the choir on the east he came upon the Gruuthuus Museum and entered, not without a suspicion of nervousness foreign to his nature. The first person his eye fell upon was Miss Scott, who was sketching a very rare piece of Brussels point lace. Her reception of him was not cordial enough to be reassuring.

"What on earth are you doing here?" she demanded.

"I purpose writing a volume on the influence of lace on women's morals," he returned gravely. "I have decided views on the subject."

"What an extraordinary young man!" she muttered.

"I shall illustrate it with specimens of the lace of all countries, all climes and all times," he added. "It will be worth reading."

"So I imagine," she retorted drily. "Perhaps you will make the illustrations yourself!" She had an uncomfortable sense that he was laughing at her efforts to make a good sketch.

"It will save money," he said, "and be more satisfactory."

Miss Scott seated herself on a chair and fanned herself with the pad on which she was writing. "It will be charitable of you to help me out," she said. "I generally depend upon my niece, but as she isn't here I have had to try."

She smiled at him a little maliciously. It was not an easy subject. Paget took the pad without more ado and started. He had no artistic training, but what skill was his could be shown, not by any large sketch, but by just such a delicate piece of work as was demanded here. Miss Scott watched it grow under his hand and did not withhold her appreciation.

"Nina couldn't do it better," she said.

"Where is she, by the way?" he asked.

"At the Couvent des Dames Anglaises," returned the other. "She was at school there and is staying with the sisters for a time."

Miss Scott looked at the sketch critically. It was far in advance of anything she could do; and as Nina the erratic might be with her friends at the convent for some time Mr. Paget could very well take her place. Perhaps he understood something of what was passing in her mind.

"If you asked me," he said, "to draw the exterior of this building I couldn't do it. My perspective belongs to the Chinese school; but if you want me to do any of these things"—he waved his hand to the various exhibits of lace—"I shall be very glad."

"You are very kind," she said. "I will take advantage of it to ask you to sketch two more things tomorrow."

Paget trod on air as he returned to his hotel. He was firmly ingratiated with the watchful aunt, and he had discovered where Nina was. Also he had found that the beautiful service at the convent chapel on the coming Sunday was free to all.

All the time he was sketching for Miss Scott, and at the luncheon she insisted he partake of at her *pension* he attempted in vain to elicit some definite information about her niece. Nina was a strange girl, he learned, who was charitable enough for some three months of each year to desert her luxurious home to travel with her aunt in second class boarding houses. She had already spent ten weeks away from her home.

"Then she'll be going back soon?" he hazarded.

"In a fortnight," she said. "I'm sorry."

"Where will she go?" he asked.

"Newport or Lenox," said the aunt. "Or possibly to Colonel Lloyd's place in the Thousand Islands." She turned on him quickly. "Have you been to America?"

"I am due there next month," he said. "My work takes me there."

"I don't think I always believe what you say," she returned doubtfully.

"I hope you don't," he said frankly. "Attempts to believe in what people say lead to more unhappiness than anything I know. 'There is more faith in honest doubt, believe me, than in half the creeds.'"

"What it is," said Miss Scott after an attempt to digest this, "is that we old folks stick to the old-fashioned virtues."

"And credit us with all the modern vices. That isn't charitable, is it?"

"You seem very happy with it all," she said slowly. "I wish my niece were a little more like you in that respect."

"And isn't she?" he demanded.

"I don't understand young people," she said gloomily. "They are full of moods. I wasn't allowed to have moods when I was young."

"This is an age of progress," he returned cheerfully. "Be wise and have no tenses." After a pause he asked, "What makes Miss Lloyd so full of moods?"

"We all have troubles," she replied cryptically. "What are you going to do tomorrow?"

"High mass at the chapel of the Couvent des Dames Anglaises," he answered.

"Why?" she demanded.

"I am anxious to see the dome built by Pulinex, and the exquisite altar of rare Persian and Egyptian marbles which was executed at Rome." He had learned all he could concerning the convent.

This temporizing with the Church of Rome sent Miss Scott into her shell. Her manner was less cordial. "I hope it will do you good," she said with a touch of satire.

VI

ALTHOUGH the convent chapel is not so ornate as some, nor so large as other of the sacred edifices of Bruges, there is an air of quiet charm about it and a musical excellence in its services which always attracts a large number of Eng-

lish and American visitors. As a girls' school it has long been well, although not very widely known. It was with something of curiosity that Paget looked about him. A mural tablet near his seat recalled to memory an English girl of the Talbot family, who had died while at the convent. There were other English names about and he wondered why Nina Lloyd should have been sent to this far-off institution. He was not very well situated for viewing the congregation as a whole, but with some straining he managed during the service to assure himself that she was not there. He did not know that in an upper gallery, screened from observation, she was sitting with Sister Veronica, a saintly woman who had more influence upon her than any of the others.

She was looking idly through the grille when her eyes lighted on Paget, who was craning his neck as unostentatiously as possible to see if by any chance she had come in late and might, after all, be sitting in the rear.

A little fleeting smile that had in it something of triumph and pleasure passed over her face. She would join her aunt on the morrow, she determined. Paget walked disappointedly back to his hotel, by way of the ramparts. In the evening he strolled through the Grand Place, where the May Fair was in progress, and found that so far from being purely a place for the Belgians to disport themselves, all the English residents and American visitors were abroad, entering into the spirit of the thing with a verve that astonished him. He was tempted to shoot at swinging glass bottles, but missing five out of six shots failed to gain the onlookers' respect. Presently, on the Rue des Pierres, corner of the Place, he came upon the most prosperous *carrousel* he had ever seen. Horses and comfortable chariots alternated, all filled with visitors of the better class. That they could sit there, smiling like children, was more than strange, he thought.

His eye followed the gyrating pleasure seekers with scorn, when he saw,

seated in one of the red plush chariots, Nina Lloyd, chatting very vivaciously with a man whom he had never seen. His eyes followed the man jealously as time after time he swung past. He was small and slightly built, but dressed with care, and was not ill-looking. He was evidently a Belgian not of the *bourgeoisie*, and that he admired the girl was obvious. What dislike Paget had felt for the unhappy Myers was swamped in his detestation of this stranger. He had been thinking of the girl as making a retreat with the white-habited sisters, and he found her, instead, laughing and riding with another man. There sprang up within him the unwarrantable feeling that he was being ill used. He could hardly feel that she had deceived him, but it seemed that Miss Scott might have let him know that her niece was no longer at the convent.

But he had laughed too often at the sorry spectacle that jealous men make of themselves to fall into that mistake. It was the first time he had experienced jealousy, and he was inclined to think that he had often been too severe in his denunciation of it.

When the *carrousel* stopped, neither Nina nor her escort alighted. He swung himself into the saddle of a speckled quadruped behind the chariot and paid his ten centimes. In the brief spell of comparative quiet he could hear the lonely Belfry chiming the "Blue Danube" waltz. The man with Miss Lloyd seemed extraordinarily attentive, and the girl had never seemed so lively and so full of charm. It was impossible that he could disturb them until one or the other left their chariot. Presently he saw the girl wave her hand to Miss Scott, who was sitting patiently on a bench which ran round the tent. She evidently desired that her aunt should ride with her, for as it slowed down the man left her and she looked for Miss Scott.

Paget scrambled from the back of his steed and took the vacant chair. "Miss Scott ought not to attempt this sort of thing," he said. "It would disturb her work."

"Where did you come from?" she demanded.

"From the spotted Rosinante behind," he answered cheerfully. "I rather like this," he added; "it beats Bloomsbury."

A happiness which was startling took possession of him.

"I meant, what brought you to Bruges?" she asked.

"I am writing 'The Effect of Women's Morals on the Lace Industry,'" he said. "It's to go into the next edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*."

"You have Raoul's seat," she said, smiling.

"He can have it," said Paget. "Let us to equitation. My steed has the funniest motion. I can recommend him."

"I prefer this," she said. "It's more comfortable."

"Raoul can have the seat," he said, "on my Pegasus."

She looked quickly at him; he seemed perfectly serious and made no effort to get up.

"He may not like it," she hazarded at last.

Paget raised his cap to Miss Scott, who bestowed upon him a look that was not wholly one of pleasure.

"There is always Miss Scott," he said. "She'll certainly enjoy his company more than mine. Be generous," he pleaded. "I saw Raoul spend at least a franc on rides for you, and heaven only knows what time he began! Let me have at least fifty centimes' worth."

Raoul passed Miss Scott without noticing her and took his seat beside two men. It was evident from his gesticulations that he was excited. He regarded Paget with unfriendly eyes, but threw smiles at Miss Lloyd with a liberality which the Englishman resented. Paget recalled his confidential attitude toward the girl with some distrust.

"You must know him very well," he observed at last.

"For years," she answered. "I know his sisters."

"What's his name?" he demanded.

"Raoul de Belleville. He lives with his father, Comte de Belleville, at the house with seven gables in the Rue Courte. He's a delightful boy."

Paget looked at him steadily.

"Yes?" he said with a faint note of interrogation in his voice.

"You'll like him," she said; "that is, if you speak French. He knows no other language except Flemish. He seems to interest you."

"What was he asking you about?" said Paget. "Every time he passed he seemed to be asking something."

"He was," admitted Nina, "but I didn't answer."

"Is it permitted to ask what it was?" he said.

"You're just as inquisitive as he," she retorted, "although not nearly so observant. He only wanted to know who gave me these flowers."

For the first time he noticed that she was wearing some William Allen Richardson roses.

"I couldn't possibly tell him," she continued, bending her delicate face to the blossoms to inhale their lingering scent. "You see, they came to me an hour before I left London, from whom, I can't imagine. They've kept fresh in a perfectly wonderful manner."

She looked at him innocently through long lashes.

"Wasn't it a stupid question to ask?"

"I have a certain sympathy with him," he answered softly, "although I hope you perceive that I am asking nothing of the kind."

"It was rather nice of you to send them," she said suddenly. "I've kept this for you."

She handed him a policeman's whistle with a piece of broken chain attached to it.

"I found it in the square garden when we were scrambling through it. I meant to have given it to you afterwards, but Pelion was piled on Ossa, whatever that may be, and I forgot." She laughed gently. "When the *douanier* found it in my trunk I felt horribly nervous. I felt international complications might happen."

He looked at it with interest. "Thanks," he said. "I shan't part with it readily."

"It's a dangerous gift," she said. "If it's found in your possession and you can't account for it there'll be trouble."

He put it in his pocket. "It won't be discovered."

She put her hand to her head. "I'm getting dizzy," she said. "Let's take my aunt to some of the other shows."

Raoul de Belleville stepped forward to meet her as she alighted from the car and whispered in her ear, but not so softly that Paget could not hear. "You are more adorable than ever, and more unkind, Nina."

The girl laughed lightly. "You're a romantic child," she said, and then introduced the men.

De Belleville's politeness was not less than Paget's. It would be a pleasure, said De Belleville, to introduce any friend of Miss Lloyd's to the Cercle Militaire. Any member of any recognized London club was welcomed. He looked keenly at Paget, who was for the moment confused. John Paget was a member of no club. Anonymity had some drawbacks. One may pretend to be many things and possess many qualities, but there is no flight of fancy that will place one's name upon the members' list of a club to which one does not belong.

He replied that, being in Bruges for so short a time, he would not impose upon M. de Belleville. The Belgian took his leave gracefully. It had been his intention for some three years to marry Nina Lloyd. A friend of his in New York had satisfied him that she was wealthy; and American dollars multiplied by five represent Belgian francs. He longed for the gay life of Brussels and Ostend.

Miss Scott declined to visit any of the shows. There was work for her at home. Nina thereupon decided to go with her and Paget was left unhappily alone.

"I wonder when I shall see you again?" he said as he shook hands.

"Bruges isn't a very big place," she said with a smile. "Good night."

VII

FROM the thirteenth century, when Bruges was one of the great wool marts of the world, the English have been familiar figures in its streets. The great printer Caxton was the head of the "English nation beyond the sea," as the colony was quaintly named, and later the second Charles made it his headquarters. Flattered by the royal presence and the interest he took in the guild of the Arquebusiers of St. Sebastien, the Brugeoisie gave him the title of King of the Guild of Archers; and a fine building at the corner of the Rue St. Amand called Au Lion de Flandre is pointed out as his residence.

The interest that the English take in the city of bridges today is not commercial, nor has it to do with royal remembrances. Its nearness to London, its cheapness of living and the excellence of some of its educational establishments for girls have made it an ideal spot for retired army or navy officers with limited means, and there is consequently a little band of such living here all the year round whose interests are practically identical. It is a point which has been seized upon by many Continental literary men that the British must have sport wherever they go. In a locality such as Bruges the opportunities are not many; but such as they are they have been utilized, and the English Sports Club, at the hamlet of Assebrouck, a mile from the Porte de Gand, is the result.

When the secretary of the club learned that Miss Lloyd, her aunt and Raoul de Belleville were the only people in Bruges known to the aspirant, he very obligingly had him proposed at a meeting that very evening. On the following afternoon Paget walked to the Porte de Gand and made his way to the ground.

His arrival caused some interest. A new man was always welcome. He had hoped that Butward, the secretary, would be there to introduce him; he could not tell that Butward was even then trying to get his ball from the bunker that safeguards the third green.

Paget was far from being nervous, but there was no sound that could have made him happier than to hear his name called with that delicious accent of the educated Louisiana woman. He turned to see Nina seated at a table around which most of the men in the club seemed to be grouped. She made room for him by the simple expedient of asking the callow youth at her side to sit at another table.

"Go and tell Louis to make some tea," she told another. "Now," she said when he had been introduced to the men about him, "do you come here by accident or design?"

"Design," he answered. "I'm an annual member in good standing. I planned to meet the secretary at half past two. I forget his name, but he's a rather nice chap who talks as if he had known much sorrow. I must have walked halfway to Ghent."

"Hush," she said. "Mrs. Butward is at the next table."

"Who's taking my name in vain?" said Mrs. Butward pleasantly.

"It's a new member," said Nina—"Mr. Paget."

Paget bowed. "Your husband was good enough to put me up."

"I hope you play golf," she answered. "He finds so few to play with him. Here he is."

Butward came toward the table and greeted Paget cordially.

"Why so *triste*?" demanded Nina.

"I lost a ball," he answered, sipping his tea—"the second in three weeks."

"I'll leave you to talk to Mr. Paget while I finish my set," she cried, jumping up. She looked at Paget's costume. "It's a pity you haven't your things here," she said.

"They're coming," he returned promptly.

She was playing with an officer of Lanciers against a girl named Portman and an Englishman answering to the name of Lewis. Nina was a far better player than Miss Portman, but the seeming superiority of Lewis to the soldier made matters even. He was settling himself to watch an interesting game when Mr. Butward called to him.

"I want to introduce you to Mrs. Broad," he said. "She is one of the oldest members of the club."

Paget looked up at a very tall, angular woman with gray hair, who inclined her head with dignity.

"Mr. Butward would have expressed it more correctly," she said, "if he had said that I had belonged to the club for a longer period than any other member."

At this point Butward left them; he said he was going to look for his ball.

"Pray sit down," said Mrs. Broad kindly. She motioned to a chair which precluded all observation of the game. Mrs. Broad poured him out some anemic liquid which she labeled tea, and he had the leisure to look at her closely.

The widow of a London lawyer, she had been driven from her suburban home by the fear of a libel action, and had come to Bruges, where she dwelt with her daughters in a small house. A witty Oxford don, who spent a long vacation in Bruges, had named her the "Pyramid." When asked the reason, he reminded his questioner that a pyramid was a solid figure bounded by plane faces.

Mrs. Broad set herself to find out who were Mr. Paget's parents, and what his occupation and his prospects.

"Are you likely to be here long?" she demanded.

"Until my book is finished," he returned.

"You are a writer, then?" she asked. "Fiction?"

"Lace," he returned gravely. "My book on the effect of lace on the morals of nations will be an uplifting one."

She regarded him steadily for a moment, but he remained undisturbed.

"Your name is familiar to me," she said. "Where did Mr. Butward say you came from?"

He sought alliteration's artful aid. "Pangborne," he said. "I am a Paget of Pangborne."

"That is fortunate," she returned more brightly. "I know the Pagets of Pangborne intimately. Mr. Broad was the attorney for Mr. Septimus Paget."

Paget was a little startled. "I don't mean Septimus," he cried.

"How should you," she said, "since he died unmarried? You must be John's son."

He shook his head cheerfully. "Try once more," he said.

"There was only one other son," she exclaimed, "and he—well, the least that can be said is that he did not resemble his brothers."

"Kind hearts," returned Paget with prodigious gravity, "are more than coronets."

"It is singular," she reflected, "that even in such a family as the Pangborne Pagets so black a sheep could be found."

"Let the dead past bury its dead," he remarked.

"Is Peter Paget dead?" she cried. "We heard he was convicted of some misdemeanor in New Zealand."

"My father was never convicted of any misdemeanor," said Paget. He felt a sudden liking for Peter Paget.

"I have heard my husband say that clever barristers repeatedly obtain freedom for their clients."

"What use were they, else?" he cried.

"Where is he?" she asked.

"Fruit farming," he told her cheerfully. "Haven't you ever heard of Paget's Peerless Pippins? He has miles of orchards."

"He must be doing well financially," she said. The future of her daughters was ever before her. They had none of them ever been asked in marriage.

"Moderately," said the other. "He has a mad passion for giving his money to missionaries. Some effect probably of those young days at Pangborne when Seppy and Jack were good little boys and Peter was the bad one. Like Carnegie, he says it's a sin to die rich."

"I am not sure that he is justified," said Mrs. Broad heavily.

"That's why I am working so hard on my book."

"Let me see," she said, "what was the subject?"

"The moral effect of lace on the

economy of a republic. Bryce will write a preface and Crane is designing the title page."

He met her eye without hesitation.

"And where—" she commenced.

"Pardon me for a moment," he cried, rising, "but Miss Lloyd wants to speak to me."

Mrs. Broad turned her massive frame about and threw a glance at Nina Lloyd that had little of kindness in it. "What they all see in that girl," she muttered, "I cannot imagine."

She looked at the further court where her four plain daughters were playing pat-ball tennis and her face softened. She was genuinely attached to them. They were swans to no one else.

"Poor man," said Nina with mock sympathy, "did the Pyramid get hold of you?"

"It did," he laughed. "And it won't be counted to you for righteousness that you failed to warn me."

"Have you satisfied her?" the girl demanded.

"I have lied with all the fluency I possess," he said.

"She'll never forgive you."

"I shall die peacefully without it," he answered. "She asked the most impertinent questions. She wanted answers to them and she got them. How did you get on? Before I was captured it seemed rather a close thing."

"They won," she said carelessly. "Seven to five. If Captain Bougival hadn't wasted so much time in trying to think of pretty things to say it would have been our set."

Paget looked in the soldier's direction and acknowledged that he was more than usually good-looking. It came as a shock to him to find what a dislike flamed up against this man to whom he had never spoken. He had experienced the same feeling when he had seen De Belleville whispering to her at the *carrousel*.

"Are you going to play again?" he asked.

"One isn't allowed to monopolize the courts," she said.

"Then, if you aren't too tired, show me the links."

"Four holes ingeniously contrived to make nine can hardly be worthy of a showman," she laughed. "You should see the Knocke Links."

"I shall be charmed," he said. "When—tomorrow?"

She looked at him for a moment before answering. His readiness to seize on the opportunity seemed to stamp him as the flirt he had not, during the time she had known him, shown himself to be. She was used to the wiles which men of all ages exhibit, and was as well able to guard against what was unwelcome as most girls. She knew that he could have held her arm more closely and forced himself into a more intimate footing during the night of adventure in London had he chosen. The behavior of Bougival or De Belleville would have been far different.

"Very well," she said. "We can leave Miss Scott on the Digue while we walk over the links. If you're very good, some day we'll walk over into Holland, where you can get cigars for five centimes each that are worth smoking."

"Who told you so?" he asked.

"Lots of men," she said. "Raoul, Mr. Lewis—oh, heaps of them! You must remember," she said, "that I know this part very well." She raised a hand. "Hush! Mrs. Broad is talking about us. Our left ears will burn."

Mrs. Broad was possessed of a heavy, flat voice which had nevertheless some carrying qualities. She was with another member of the club in the little room occupied by the ground man, who was also invaluable in the preparation of the *al fresco* teas which were a feature of the club.

"Miss Lloyd," boomed Mrs. Broad's voice, "generally manages to attract all the eligible men whether they are English, American or Belgians."

"She is very pretty," said her companion.

"It is not my style of prettiness," retorted Mrs. Broad with a sarcasm which was unintentional. "I am pleased to say that today she is flirting with a young man whom I shall not permit my dear girls to know."

The other lady yawned. "Why not?" she demanded. "He looks rather nice."

"I disapprove of his father," said Mrs. Broad. "My husband and my husband's father—family solicitors with a large practice—knew all the Pagets intimately."

"She has established the antiquity of the Pagets, if nothing else," he whispered to the girl.

"That seems to me to have no bearing on this man whatever," said Mrs. Broad's companion. "What is he? He has the service cut about him."

"A journalist," cried Mrs. Broad with some appearance of scorn, "a yellow journalist engaged in writing a series of articles on the immoralities of lace makers."

"Most interesting!" said the old lady placidly.

"That may be," said Mrs. Broad grimly, "but it is not my idea of respectability."

Nina sprang to her feet angrily.

"I can't stand any more of it," she cried angrily. "She is the only woman I have ever wanted to scratch. Let's go and watch the croquet tournament."

When they were seated she continued: "She tries to damage everybody. The idea of dragging in one's family history!"

"You mean my father?" he asked.

"What business is it of hers?" she cried.

He smiled. "I'm afraid she's got hold of the wrong man. It was my fatal desire to be agreeable. I should have answered with equal readiness to the Pagets of Penzance or Plymouth or Pimlico."

"Then I've been sympathizing with someone else! I begin to distrust you."

"I assure you you need not," he returned more seriously. "I would rather you trusted me. When I was young I admired your national saint, Washington of the Cherry Tree, and thought it wrong to tell anything but the truth. When I found how men and women, particularly women, ask all sorts of personal questions and expect truthful answers, I became appalled. It was like

opening a page of one's private journal and publishing it to the world. I had no secrets, but I had lots of little silly ambitions, hopes, projects, which I felt I could not reveal. One must never hesitate in answering—you know it's suspicious. To protect myself and all these little ambitions I spoke of I became a fluent romancer and answerer of unnecessary questions. Thus do I dispose of the Binnses and the Broads."

"But when is one to believe you?" she asked.

"You need never make any mistake," he said. "I shall always tell you the truth."

"Are you always so generous?" she demanded.

"I haven't often such an excuse," he said.

She laughed. "Look at Mrs. Broad glaring at us. She is clucking to her chicks. There they are." She pointed out the four exponents of pat-ball tennis who were passing.

"On the whole," he said, "I'm glad she doesn't consider me respectable. Are you going home?" he asked as she rose to her feet.

"Captain Bougival offered me a lift." He saw a smart, hog-maned cob waiting by the gate attached to a ralli-cart.

"Rather nice turnout," he admitted.

"The cob won at Olympia last year," she said. "Captain Bougival drives very well."

"What time shall I call for you tomorrow?" he asked.

"About half past ten," she said. "*Au revoir.*"

He watched her climb into Bougival's cart and take the reins. The cob, high-mettled and well bred, was restive at being kept waiting, and he saw with admiration how well the girl drove. The looks which Captain Bougival bent upon her annoyed him. He sighed audibly and sat down on a bench and lighted a cigarette.

VIII

IN order to absorb what she thought was the local color of Belgian life, Miss Scott stayed at a small *pension* where

so much bad French was spoken that her North Cambridge accent passed almost unnoticed. Paget was appalled at the lack of comfort and the *bourgeois* atmosphere surrounding it. And the more so when he saw Nina, arrayed in a costume of white serge and looking charming, come into the dowdy room whose only pretensions to ornament were the highly colored plaster casts of popular saints.

"My aunt won't be able to come," she said gaily.

"I am extremely glad," he answered.

She looked at him curiously. "I imagined at least you would profess regret."

"I made a compact to tell you the truth," he said. "I do not regret it. Why should I?"

"On the whole," she said, "I think you are rather an incomprehensible person."

"I feel a very happy one," he returned. "It's a glorious day; the ride will be delightful, and I shall be improving my knowledge of geography."

In crossing the Grand Place to take the steam tram they met Bougival in uniform. He was needlessly effusive in his greetings, thought Paget, and raised a feeling which he would not admit was jealousy.

"Why are you so silent?" asked Nina when they had left the lancer and were in the tram.

"Do you like him?" demanded Paget.

"Enormously," she returned. "He dances exquisitely and rides very well for a Belgian. Also he writes pretty verses and possesses a charming mother. They live in a great house in the Rue Longue surrounded by high walls. I stay there sometimes. Don't you think him good-looking?"

"Yes," admitted Paget, "but I think his tennis is simply rotten. He does nothing but slam and serve hard into the net."

"That was because he was trying to compose verses," she said, "as he played—like Cyrano de Bergerac in his duel with the Vicomte. Don't you remember:

*"Ballade du duel qu'en l'hôtel bourguignon
Monsieur de Bergerac eût avec un bêtire . . .*

"You'll admit that verse making is difficult under such circumstances as a fast set with Mr. Lewis playing against one."

"I'll confess I couldn't do it," he said.

"But you think you could beat him with the racquet?"

"I'd like to try," returned Paget.

"You shall," she said. "I'll give a prize to be competed for by all the men in the club. The idea will please Mrs. Broad very much."

"Not so much as it pleases me," he said with a smile.

"You think you will win, then?" She smiled. "What conceit the normal man has!"

"What encouragement, you mean," he said. "I haven't touched a racquet this season, but I shall do all I can to win."

"Be honest," she said. "Wouldn't it be truer if you said you would do all you could to beat Captain Bougival?"

"I wish I hadn't made that compact," he returned. "Yes, it would be truer."

She looked at him innocently. "Why?" she demanded. "You hardly know him by sight even. Men are very odd creatures."

"They are perfectly simple to understand," he said. "I think we often deceive ourselves, but I don't think women ever have much difficulty."

"Whence this worldly knowledge?" she demanded.

"From you, in part," he answered. "I have seen your influence on Myers of Bloomsbury and these gentlemen of West Flanders."

"I hope you mean that nicely," she said. "Has my influence been good?"

"I should call it disturbing," he said. "Yes, that's the word. For your sake De Belleville would willingly assassinate me and drop my corpse in a canal. And Bougival, he looked at me as though he were sorry the good old days of dueling were gone."

"And does my sphere of influence end with these two men?" she asked him.

"By no means," he answered. "It extends to me, too. Last night when I had finished dinner I wrote a very long letter to my father on the manifold beauties of platonic friendship. To-night I shall write and ask him to tear it up."

"Why blame me?" she demanded. "And why destroy such a valuable document?"

"It would be honest," he returned. "Yesterday I really thought that friendship was the best thing in the world."

She was almost glad when two priests got in the compartment and sat next to them. They were old, withered men who took snuff and chattered incessantly. Paget regarded them with uncharitable eyes.

She had met too many men and had been in society too long not to know that Paget had fallen in love with her. There are so many subtle signs that women may observe, which to the experienced are almost certain indications, that a mistake was most unlikely. That he had admired her from their first meeting she knew very well; that he had followed her from London was equally obvious; and this sudden flaming jealousy of De Belleville and Captain Bougival—these were symptoms she had seen too often. She looked at him with added interest. He was a type she had always liked. And she was one of those girls who demand of the men they like a certain skill in exercises and a certain bodily strength. He had lifted her to the top of the iron railings on that memorable night in London as though she were of no weight, and she was almost sure that he excelled in sports. She did not know that there were not three polo players living his equals and none his superior. Passionately fond of equestrian exercise, she had liked Bougival for his fearless riding. She could not know that Lord Mountcastle, one of the best gentleman riders in Europe, was the John Paget sitting rather sulkily by her side and glowering at two garlic-perfumed old priests.

At Westcapelle the old men alighted.

But Paget had had sufficient time to reflect that he must go slower in his wooing. It was as well, he reflected, that the priests had come in time. He might have made a tactical blunder.

"You look very cheerful," said the girl.

"I am at peace with all the universe," he answered, lifting his cap politely to one of the priests who glanced at him through the open window.

"You change quickly," she said. "In Bruges you seemed to view things as through a glass darkly."

"It was a necessary transitional stage," he answered more gravely. "I have never been sufficiently foolish to pretend I knew anything about women, but, as I said, men are perfectly simple to understand. I begin to understand myself at last."

"You take no credit for rapid perception then?"

"The knowledge doesn't humiliate me," he said; "it makes me happy."

"I am at sea," she cried.

"And I," he answered softly, "know the haven where I would be."

"That sounds rather like nonsense," she said, smiling. "Or else it is very deep. Is there any chance of your making this desired haven?"

"I don't know," he returned simply, and for a time did not speak.

Try as he might, Paget could never understand why he had been so blind as not to know from the first moment that the interest he had felt in Nina Lloyd was love. It was not a willful deception, for he was essentially honest, and exactly when the knowledge of it was born he could not say. He knew only that he loved her, and that no matter what view his father took of the duties of his rank he would never marry any other woman. He felt amazed that he could ever have drifted into an engagement with Mildred Heronhurst. Certain confidences made to him by his friends who knew him for a man who never betrayed such were made suddenly plain to him. He had never been able to understand what had led some men he knew to abandon their former interests and take their

sole pleasure in the company of the woman they loved. Not they, but he, had been blind; for the miracle had been made plain to him. He glanced almost timidly at the girl. She was looking from the window at some peasant children by the roadside. Her perfect lips were parted in a smile and he felt almost as he imagined some humble soul must who bows at the shrine of his saint. He had met pretty women by the score, and clever women, and women who were both clever and beautiful, but never such as she. He was vaguely troubled by a feeling that this should have been the lady of his dreams. And he acknowledged the fact that he had never dreamed. It almost seemed as if he had been disloyal to have lived his twenty-eight years without having some intuition that he would meet her. And with this there came over him that strange, sweet humility which must ever spring of a first love. Although her voice was the one of all others he was most charmed to hear, he was yet strangely grateful for her silence. So many things had to be thought of, so many plans made, that he was almost overwhelmed.

The girl looked at him and wondered what had set his jaw so firmly. "You look as though you had made a great resolve," she said.

"I have," he answered. "It's the only one I have ever made that is worth speaking about. Do you know," he continued, "that I've always affected to laugh at what I didn't understand; I have made a vow not to be so intolerant. Isn't that worth recording?"

"It's a sign of regeneration," she said.

They were both oddly silent as they walked over the short grass of the links and presently came to a little hillock which commanded a view of the sea. She pointed to the east.

"That's Flushing at the mouth of the Scheldt," she said. "Antwerp is about fifty miles up the river."

He looked toward the west. "Not there," she cried. "That's Heyst."

She looked at him reprovingly.

"You are not a very good pupil. I'm afraid you haven't any deep interest in geography."

"I have," he insisted. "I think it's a fascinating subject, but I can always read about Breskens and Walcheren. If I feel like it I can take the boat from Harwich any week and come and revel in them. They will be there during my lifetime at least. How often shall we sit here and look at them?"

"So you want to talk about yourself?" she asked.

"I'd rather talk about you," he answered frankly.

"Why?"

"You're such a mysterious sort of person," he laughed.

"I'm a woman," she said. "It is our *métier*. But, all the same, I don't know what you mean."

He was sitting on a little hillock of turf while she was perched upon one slightly higher. He was looking up at her eagerly, smiling and happy.

"You're very young," she said suddenly.

"Young!" he cried. "Is eight and twenty young then?"

"It may be anything," she answered, "but with you it amounts to boyishness. How long have you known me?"

"Two weeks," he said promptly.

"Two weeks, and in that time we have met perhaps six times."

"Seven," he corrected, "counting today."

"Well, then, seven," she laughed gently; "and you are boyish enough to think that I, who have surrounded the real me in myself with an armor of reserve, am going to tell you what my innermost thoughts are. It shows you to be very young."

"Or very impertinent," he added. "Believe me, it means merely that I am honest. It was this very armor of yours which interested me. One puts on armor for defense. Even the Maid of the old Orleans laid hers aside sometimes. One doesn't dwell always in the enemy's camp."

"That would be a good name for life," she said meditatively—"the 'enemy's camp.'"

"Do you think I am an enemy?" he asked, looking at her steadily.

She glanced at him for a moment and then turned her gaze out to sea, where some stout little boats of Heyst were beating up to their pebbly beach. Paget was honest, she decided, and he could be a true friend to a woman. There was something about him which attracted her. Not all women care for the bold look of a Bougival or the incessant compliments of a De Belleville. It would be very easy and very pleasant to give him her confidence.

"Am I an enemy?" he repeated.

"No," she said, "you are not an enemy." Then she sighed.

"Why should that make you sigh?" he asked.

"I was sighing to think of a letter I forgot to post in London until it was too late."

"Was it so serious?"

"I was invited to a wedding," she said, "and I forgot to acknowledge the invitation. Is it serious, do you suppose?"

"Not at all," he decided. "It's not worth a sigh on a day like this." He sniffed the warm, pleasant wind blowing over the dunes. "When one is healthy and young and the best of life lies before one, there is no need for sighing."

"Oh, the youngness of you!" she laughed.

"Oh, the happiness of me!" he said.

"I suppose there is such a thing," she observed.

"As happiness?" he cried. "Mysterious Maid of New Orleans, of course there is. Don't you feel it?"

"You are more mysterious than I," she said, evading an answer. "Much more so."

"I!" he exclaimed. "My life is an open book."

"Which you keep closed," she returned dryly.

So little was he used to thinking of himself as the friendless Paget who was not even blessed with a past that her remark came as something of a shock. He had no answer for her.

"There are a number of things about

that night of extraordinary adventures that I haven't yet asked you," she said. "The fact that I have not yet asked should speak for my lack of curiosity."

"Or interest," he retorted.

"After we got into the wrong house we met a very tall priest. What did you say to change his severe front to a friendly one?"

"I explained the affair to his satisfaction." Paget was aware that his explanation sounded a lame one. "He took a generous view of the case."

"What was his name?" she demanded.

"Trevenose," he told her, "Father Trevenose."

"Then you weren't romancing when you gave him as your reference? You did really know him?"

"Since I was a child," he said.

"I've misjudged you," she said with a smile. She rose to her feet. "I'm hungry."

"Luncheon is indicated," he cried, springing up, "and I have all the better appetite for being restored to your good opinion."

She threw him a quick smile. "Was Smith also a boyhood friend?"

"I've dropped Smith," he retorted gaily.

The little luncheon at the only hotel which was opened for the season was passed very happily. The girl seemed in extraordinarily good spirits and made elaborate plans for the tennis tournament.

"After the patronizing way you spoke of Captain Bougival's play I shall expect you to beat him badly."

Paget smiled. "I'll do all I can," he said.

"There are several men in Ghent who might come over. And I know a man in Brussels who won in Wimbledon last year. He'll probably beat you."

"He'll get the opportunity," conceded Paget cheerfully. "But I'm no Doherty at the game, remember."

"It's a pity you haven't the gift of verse," she said mischievously. "The duel of wit and tennis between you and Jacques Bougival would go down into

the history of the game. He plays very gracefully and I can imagine his winning stroke accompanied by,

"A la fin de l'envoi—je touche."

"Couldn't you rise to the occasion? England has produced the most wonderful poets in the world."

"If you'll give me leave to practise my maiden efforts on you I'll start instantly. I think I could write verses to you," he said slowly. "I've read sonnets and rondeaus on eyebrows and dimples and tiny feet and curling hair, but never to the color on the lady's cheek. There's a delicious flush on your cheeks that should make a poet out of any man."

"That wouldn't do at all," she said. "I purposed it should be man to man. The other is too commonplace. Surely you've written verses."

"I fear they lacked the real stamp of genius," he retorted. "I was younger then by half than I am now. I was just going to Eton, and the daughter of the head of my preparatory school charmed me beyond measure. The parting seemed to rend my soul and poetry escaped through the rent."

"Don't you remember any of it?" she asked.

"Only that I sent her my love in a chalice."

"Why a chalice?" demanded Nina.

"That isn't a customary vehicle, is it?"

"Her name was Alice, you see. I had no other choice but 'valise,' and that seemed so prosaic."

"She was a great deal older than you, I suppose?"

"Years," he confessed. "She married the village curate within six months of receiving my effusion. It was my earliest proof of woman's unkindness."

"So you were at Eton?" she said after a pause. She knew that to the great school near Windsor the children of the obscure are not wont to go. It was, she had heard, not only the great school of the British aristocracy, but also of the rich. That she had chosen to stay with her aunt in a boarding house in Bloomsbury and at an obscure Bruges pension was merely a whim. Why

should Paget have come to Bloomsbury, too? she wondered. She found herself beginning to take an interest in him.

"Five years at the dear old place," he said. "I loved Eton, with its placid green meadows, which the kindly Thames flooded each November."

"I've been there," she said. "It was two years ago."

She racked her mind to recall the name of the scholars who wore queer gowns and had none of the high fees to pay. She had an idea they were called Oppidans.

"Did you get a scholarship?" she demanded.

"Was I a 'Tug?'" he said. "Good heavens, no! Only the clever boys are 'Tugs.' I was too fond of cricket and lawn tennis to shine."

"So you admit your prowess at tennis, do you?" She laughed. "Poor Captain Bougival! How are you at golf?"

"A third-rater," he answered. "Thoroughly happy if I get a good smack off the tee. My putting is rank and I can't manage small approaches."

"I will arrange a golf tournament just to see if you speak the truth."

"I will cheerfully play at anything you please," he returned, "from ping pong to polo."

"You play polo?" she said.

"I'm as keen as ginger on it," he said.

Decidedly Mr. Paget was a perplexing person. Nina Lloyd had moved in the smart hunting set of her country too much not to know that polo is a game which poor men cannot play. Mr. Paget was either so much better off than his present mode of life would indicate, or else he was merely bragging. She detested men who bragged about a prowess which was not theirs even more than she loathed those who assumed airs of financial importance. Bougival was a far better player than one would have guessed from his game with Miss Lloyd, the game which Paget had observed critically. If in three sets he could be beaten on the courts he knew so well, his conqueror would

be a player of merit. Any contest of this kind raised the keenest interest in the girl.

"The tennis tournament will come off next week," she said decidedly. She looked at her watch. "We must go now, Mr. Paget."

"It isn't late," he said. "Why not wait for an hour?"

"Assebrouck," she answered. "Captain Bougival and I are playing Mr. Lewis and his sister at five."

She was not inclined to talk on the way to Bruges and it was sufficient happiness for Paget to ride by her side, his arm touching hers, and contenting himself with frequent glances at her exquisite profile. What would be his plans for the future he did not know, and for the moment did not care. He felt almost appalled at his good fortune. That she, this wonderful girl, had permitted him such a friendly intimacy was a piece of luck which he felt could not last. He made up his mind that at Assebrouck, if he chanced to be introduced to Bougival, he would be courteous and exhibit no trace of jealousy. She would feel that he had no right to be jealous, and indeed he confessed that it might be embarrassing to her.

Bougival played exceedingly well in the set with Nina; and Paget, sitting watching, admitted that he had not guessed the Belgian's true form. When it was finished the lancer strolled over to Paget and took a seat by his side. He was exceedingly glad to know that he need not try to express the disagreeable things he meant to say in any but his own tongue.

"That was a very good set," said Paget pleasantly. "Miss Lloyd's driving is splendid."

"You admire Miss Lloyd, perhaps?" said the Belgian.

Paget looked at him quickly. Bougival's face was impassive.

"Naturally," said the other. "What man would not?"

"We feel here," said Bougival, "that Miss Lloyd belongs to us." There was something vaguely antagonistic in his voice.

"Such a feeling must give you great pleasure," Paget returned.

"It has been the aim of the committee to keep the club very select."

"A very good aim, too," said the other.

"And when by any mischance a member has been elected without proper investigation, a member whom we do not like, we endeavor to let such a member understand this and withdraw."

There was no questioning the tone of his voice now. It was hostile.

"Your confidences are very interesting," returned Paget.

"Mr. Butward tells me you gave as references Miss Lloyd and M. de Belleville. I learn from Miss Lloyd's aunt that she met you less than three weeks ago in a London *pension*, where you forced yourself upon them."

Paget flushed, but tried to keep his temper.

"You must have the welfare of the club very much at heart," he said, "to pursue such investigations."

"M. de Belleville tells me that he was introduced to you at the fair, and that but for the unwelcome meeting he knows nothing whatsoever of you."

Paget spoke very quietly. "Let us understand one another. You mean that I am not a fit member of your club?"

"What quickness of apprehension!" exclaimed Bougival with mock admiration.

"But that is your meaning?" the other persisted.

"Not entirely," returned Bougival. "I meant that to give as a reference a man to whom one has been casually introduced is not the act of a gentleman."

Paget looked up to see Nina regarding him closely. It would never do for her to suspect the conversation.

"Mr. Butward," he said, "asked me if I knew anyone in Bruges. I told him only Miss Lloyd, her aunt and M. de Belleville. I had no idea of offering any of them as personal references."

Bougival smiled insolently. "Ah!" he said, "I see."

It was Paget's turn. "What perspicacity!" he remarked.

Bougival had a notoriously bad temper when crossed in any manner. He was thoroughly angry to learn that Paget had passed some hours with the girl. He laid himself out to insult the man he supposed to be his rival.

"I have conceived for you," he said, "a very deep aversion."

"You could offer me no sincerer compliment," said Paget calmly.

Bougival clenched his fists. "I am a soldier, sir," he returned.

"You wear a uniform," Paget corrected.

"We are not in England now," said the Belgian.

"I find your conversation most instructive," replied Paget, "although, to be candid, I had suspected what you say already."

"In Continental Europe," Bougival said angrily, "when we have a quarrel do you know what we do?"

"You choose out a place where ladies are gathered so that you may insult a man with impunity? Is that it?"

Paget's coolness had an infuriating effect upon the other.

"You are adept at excuses," cried he.

Paget had always laughed at the idea of dueling being taken seriously. His great-grandfather had been a notorious gambler and duelist in the days of the Regent, famed throughout Europe for his cynical wit and his skill with the rapier. Bougival's insult had torn aside the prejudice with which the Anglo-Saxon is wont to regard such settlement of disputes, and the dead and gone duelist lived again in his great-grandson. He had never experienced in his life such a detestation of any man as of this sneering officer of Belgian cavalry, who arrogated to himself proprietary airs over Nina Lloyd. Bougival leaned nearer to him.

"It takes a very little while for one to cross the Dutch frontier. On the dunes one meets nobody. A difference can be adjusted simply. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly," returned Paget. "But I

suggest that if you do not wish to call attention to your quarrel you had better moderate your voice. Unless, of course"—he shrugged his shoulders—"you wish for help."

Bougival constrained himself.

"Good," he said, "excellent! I think we need go no further than the sand dunes where Miss Lloyd took you today. There is something fitting in punishing you there."

"In *trying* to punish me there," Paget corrected equably.

"I shall do it," cried the other.

"Perhaps," assented Paget. "One never knows. In any event I beg you not to celebrate the affair in verse."

Bougival made a gesture of anger.

"Keep still, man," said Paget quietly. "Can't you see Miss Lloyd watching us? Is it your quaint idea of chivalry to make her notorious? Surely you see that we must keep this from her."

Bougival glanced quickly toward the girl and saw Paget had spoken the truth.

"M. de Belleville will no doubt be pleased to accompany you to the links as soon as possible. He will find Major d'Etraille waiting for you. We might play a foursome. You play golf, I take it?"

Paget smiled. The proposition seemed an excellent one. To play this sort of golf seemed entertaining. He was no less angry than the Belgian, but held himself in better control.

"Whatever M. de Belleville suggests I shall follow," he answered.

He bowed slightly to Bougival and rose to his feet. Nina Lloyd was walking toward them and he did not want her to guess from the scowl on the other's face that they had quarreled. Whatever doubts he might entertain of the propriety of his conduct in the future, he was determined to carry out on his part the suggestion made by the man who had insulted him.

"Did you have a good game?" he asked as he met the girl.

"I wasn't playing very keenly," she answered. "I was thinking."

"Ten centimes is yours if you will tell me of what," he said, smiling.

"Presently," she returned. "Captain Bougival!" she called.

Bougival left his seat and sauntered toward her. He turned his back deliberately to Paget and addressed her. "I am yours to command," he said, "as you have known for years."

She looked about her. There were people passing and repassing. A number were watching the croquet players, and others of the club members were clustered by the tennis courts. Mrs. Broad was sitting by the first tee watching one of her daughters endeavor to make a successful drive.

"I want to talk to you both about the tournament," she said. "But there are too many people here. I think we'll walk round the links and discuss it." She turned to Paget. "I want you, too."

Mrs. Broad watched the girl stroll gracefully out of sight accompanied by the two best-looking men in the club. She remarked bitterly that in her young days such things would not be tolerated at all.

Paget knew that it was for a more important reason than she had stated that he had been asked to accompany the two to a distant corner of the little links. He reflected irritably that Bougival had raised his voice and had made gestures which a close observer must have seen were inimical. Bougival, for his part, was glad that the girl should know. Although dueling is not recognized in the Belgian service any more than in the British or American, there is a breadth of interpretation of anti-dueling legislation, which in the little kingdom is frequently stretched to passive acquiescence in such a code of honor.

On the green of the fifth hole, which was conveniently screened by trees, the girl paused and looked at her escorts.

"Were you quarreling?" she demanded.

Paget did not answer. He seemed to find some difficulty in extracting a cigarette from his case.

"Did you hear me?" she cried, stamping her foot. "I asked if you were quarreling. Mr. Paget, I am talking to you."

"I was making arrangements," he answered, "to play a foursome. M. de

Belleville and I against Captain Bougival and a Major—" He looked at the lancer inquiringly.

"Major d'Etraille," said Bougival, "of my regiment."

"Major d'Etraille doesn't play golf," she asserted.

"We are teaching him," said Bougival with a smile. "You have often told him it would do him good. You may therefore blame yourself or take praise to yourself, as you see fit, for our little expedition."

She looked from one to the other. Bougival had adopted a rather theatrical pose which became him amazingly. His arms were folded and there was no effort at concealment. He looked very handsome, she thought. Paget was standing very upright and lacked in his carriage the grace of the Belgian. He was paler than she had ever seen him and sterner. Of the two she felt instinctively that he looked the deadlier.

"It is not true, Jacques," she said. "I saw you talking angrily. You were not arranging any game of golf."

"Mr. Paget will tell you what I said was true," he answered.

She turned to Paget. "You promised to tell me the truth."

Bougival sneered. "What a pretty compact!"

"Be quiet," she commanded imperiously. "Mr. Paget, were you quarreling?"

"Yes," he said.

"What about?"

"Captain Bougival is not satisfied about my fitness to adorn the club. Really, it's not important, Miss Lloyd. I may well fall below his high standard."

"Were you going to fight?"

"We are," said Bougival grimly.

"Jacques," she said, "I have known you for five years and you have often told me that you valued my friendship."

"And I meant it," he said. "I value it more than anything else."

"Unless you promise me to give up this stupid idea, not only will I never speak to you again, but I will tell the Governor that you contemplate fighting a duel. I shall tell your colonel, and I shall tell your mother."

Bougival threw an evil glance at his rival. "My honor is more than anything to me. Do you think I can bear to be thought a coward by Mr. Paget?"

She stretched out her arms to Paget appealingly. "You wouldn't hint at such a thing, would you?"

"I have never thought Captain Bougival a coward," he said. "I resented and still resent what he said."

"Would you apologize?" she asked the Belgian.

He shook his head decisively. "No."

"You are both behaving abominably," she said. "Everyone thinks I am mixed up in this quarrel. I was not the only one who saw or heard it. Do you both want to make my name a by-word? I am more than surprised at you, Mr. Paget. You come of a people who do not fight duels."

"I come of a people who no more care for insults than do any others," he said stiffly. There was in her tone a touch of asperity which he could not think was justifiable. He felt there was something very childish in the whole business, but his resentment toward Bougival was far from dying.

"It comes to this," said the girl: "If I don't get your promise to behave properly I shall leave Belgium tomorrow morning early. I don't want to leave yet, but I can't remain and be talked about in this absurd fashion. I am not so silly as to suppose you will be friends or shake hands, but I do expect you to consider me and my convenience. I have just been arranging the tournament with Mr. Butward, and you two are to play off the first match tomorrow; and here you go and spoil everything."

"I will play Mr. Paget," said Bougival, "whenever you like."

She smiled at him gratefully and turned to the other.

"And you?" she demanded.

"As you please," he answered.

IX

WHEN Paget arrived at the ground on the following afternoon he found that there was half an hour to spare

before the play began. Bougival had not yet come, and he changed into his flannels and waited patiently for the only duel he would fight with him. Presently Mr. Butward introduced him to a charmingly pretty little blonde English girl, who had just returned from a stay in London. She was vivacious and full of eagerness as to the outcome of the match.

"For the reputation of our country you must beat him," she said. "You've seen him play?"

"Two or three sets," he answered. "I don't feel at all sure of escaping a horrible licking. He seems abnormally active."

Miss Buxton laughed. "So should you be, too. Why not?"

"Out of training," he said briefly. "I haven't touched a racquet this year."

"What's your strongest game?" she asked.

"Placing," he answered. "I win more by that than anything when I'm in form."

"Here they come!" cried Miss Buxton, looking along the winding avenue which led from the Ghent road to the club. "She's wearing Belgian colors. Red, black and yellow suit her style, being dark."

He could see Miss Lloyd driving Bougival's smart cobs tandemwise. Her hat was adorned with the Belgian national colors. Bougival from his lower seat was gazing up at her with a smile. In a dog cart behind came some of his brother officers. Isabel Buxton knew that Paget had paid Nina Lloyd a great deal of attention. She had heard it rumored that they had even once been engaged. She wondered how he would take this mark of favoritism.

"Poor Mr. Paget," she murmured. "There's not a person with your colors on."

"Indeed there is," he replied, smiling with the hope that Nina would see. "You're wearing Eton blue. *Floreat Etona!*"

"I'm glad," said the other. "I want you to win."

She was herself a notoriously good player, an excellent judge of the game and already thoroughly excited at what she considered an international match. There had rarely been such a gallery at Assebrouck. If he fumed at the injustice of having to play in an unprepared state, Paget did not show it. Nina came over to him and sat by Miss Buxton's side.

"Traitor," said the English girl, pointing to her colors.

"I'm not an Englishwoman," cried the other. "You don't mind my wearing them?" she asked of Paget.

"I expected it," he said.

"I don't know why you should," she cried, flushing. This was a different Paget, she thought. If he had smiles they were only for Isabel Buxton. She rose to her feet a little angrily. "My colors are the favorites in the betting," she said.

Isabel Buxton pointed to the Eton blue. "Favorites don't always win," she laughed. "True blue forever, you know."

It was astonishing how readily and completely, thought Nina, Miss Buxton had assumed charge of Paget and his interests; and it showed how abominably fickle the man was to allow it and look as though he enjoyed it. She looked from the man to the girl as they chatted together; they were on excellent terms. Miss Buxton saw the look and took it at its feminine value. "Nina's really keen on him," she thought; and then, being an adept at the eternal game which has been waged between man and woman since the world was young and has never ceased to hold its interest, she prattled merrily on. A conclave of her sisters had decided that she was at her best when she smiled and showed her vivacity and laughed prettily. She had not Nina's features, but incomparably more sprightliness.

"Come here when the set is over," she said, "and I will give you the benefit of my advice. I know Captain Bougival's play absolutely."

"Of course I will," he cried. "But

I warn you you are going to be disappointed."

He spoke truly, for she observed with chagrin that he was beaten by a love set. He seemed to have no judgment for distance and the almost phenomenal agility of the Belgian gave him little chance. The two girls who were most interested in the game were also the two best judges of it. A stray stroke here and there of Paget's showed that in form he might be brilliant. When it was over he walked over to Miss Buxton's chair and put on his sweater.

"Looks pretty bad," he said.

"Yes," she agreed seriously. "Your lack of practice will give him the match."

"What worries me," he said seriously, "is that my service won't come off. I could beat him if only I could get them over. His wonderful quickness and my slamming into the net are winning for him."

"In form are you better than he?" she demanded. "I shan't think it conceited, but I want to feel hopeful."

"I think I am as good," was all he would admit.

The second set started just as disastrously for Paget. His attempts to kill balls met with bad luck. They either went out of the court or into the net. Love four against him was called when it was his turn to serve.

Until then he had been half afraid to try his service, which had the reputation of being perhaps the fastest of any British amateur. No other chance of redemption offered itself. The first ball was not a fault and flashed by Bougival like lightning. The second Bougival returned, but out of the court. Paget won his first game.

Bougival lost his service game. His opponent's eye was improving, and all the Belgian's activity could not make up for the other's deadly placing. Paget won the set, six to four. He won the deciding set, six to two. Bougival congratulated him shortly. He felt perfectly certain that if he had a little more practice against those deadly swerving serves he could win. Nina and Isabel knew that in form Paget

could always beat Bougival. The victory brought very little happiness to the winner. He was obsessed with the feeling that Nina loved Captain Bougival. She had given every indication of it. She drove with him constantly; she wore his colors and had taken his part in their wretched squabble in a fashion which was obviously unfair.

He hardly heard what Miss Buxton was saying. She was a charming girl, he admitted, and pretty, but he was in no mood to talk while behind them sat Nina making tea for Bougival and some of his friends. Mr. Butward with his air of settled melancholy joined Paget and his companion.

"I congratulate you," he said. "Tomorrow you will have M. Marambot, of Brussels, as an opponent."

"Mr. Paget will beat him," said Miss Buxton decidedly. "He's very little better than Captain Bougival at his best, and today he was at the top of his form."

"I don't think I shall have the opportunity," said Paget, speaking with a distinctness which was apparent, as he intended it to be.

"Are you going?" cried the girl. "What a shame! Nina and I and Captain Bougival and you would make a perfectly ripping four."

"I had hoped," observed Mr. Butward, "that we might have enjoyed golf at Knocke together."

"I'm afraid not," returned Paget. "My father is an invalid and wants me at home."

"I must give you a farewell tea," said the girl. "I'll tell Louis to give me my things."

"Don't," he said. "Have tea with me instead. Isn't there rather a decent tea place near the cathedral?"

"Place Simon Stevin and the Rue des Pierres," she said. "They have the most delightful *pâtisseries* there. As a tourist, you know probably that Simon invented the decimal system." She rose from her seat and looked about her. "I have a small sister here somewhere," she said. "You must include her if I go."

Nina watched Paget and the Buxton girls as they took the short path for the steam tram. He had bowed to her as he passed. And this would be the last time she would see him. Mysterious John Paget, who had come so strangely into her life as an accessory of unpremeditated crime, was to pass out of it because she had chosen to visit her displeasure upon him for Bougival's quarrel. For sheer unreasonableness she gave the unhappy Paget the award. Bougival was whispering complimentary things into her ear. He was reminding her of the first time he had seen her, and how beautiful she looked. "Don't, don't!" she exclaimed. "I'm not pleased enough with you to listen to that sort of thing."

"Not pleased with me?" he cried. "Why not?"

"My colors went down to defeat," she said. "Isabel Buxton's blue was triumphant."

"The fortunes of war," he said. "At that game of golf it might have been different."

"I forbade you to speak of it," she said. "Really, I think men are abominable. They always do the wrong thing and think the wrong thing. I should be happier in a convent."

"Where are you going?" he demanded, rising with her.

"To get some coffee somewhere," she answered. "The tea, the eternal tea, is smoky."

"I crave coffee, too," he said. "We'll drive into the city and get some."

When Paget came into the *confiseur's* by the Place Simon Stevin, Captain Bougival and Nina were there sipping coffee ices. Paget's flood of talk, which had passed the time away agreeably enough, suffered an access of silence. Isabel Buxton guessed the reason. "Stupid children," she muttered.

X

It was Paget's intention to take an evening train for Ostend, spend the night there and make an early crossing. He was packing his things when a note

was brought to him. The writing was unfamiliar.

I shall be on the Rempart de la Bouverie at the corner of the Rue de la Cloche at half past eight tonight. N. L.

He was profoundly agitated by this unexpected message. What could she want with him after treating him so strangely? A wild happiness surged up in him that almost frightened him. And then, as quickly, he was depressed by the fear that she might want him for some trivial purpose; or even that the initials N. L. were added to a practical joker's note. The suspense was not easy to bear. He was upon the ramparts by eight o'clock. Few people were abroad. It was blowing coldly along the canal. Many times he made the circuit of the Rue de la Cloche, the Rue de la Bouverie and then down the Rue du Miroir to the Rempart without seeing a soul. It was rather more than half past the hour when he saw her coming. He had thought of many things to say to her. He had determined not to betray any deep feeling. She should see that his front was calm and unruffled. He would at least retreat in good order. But when she held out her hand and the gas lamps showed that she smiled, he was tongue-tied, the reproaches he had hugged died away and he could have kissed the feet of the woman he loved.

"I like to walk in the wind," she said. "Let us go round to the windmills, Don Quixote. I think they are on the St. Croix rampart, the ones I mean."

This was on the other side of the city; he was dumbly thankful.

"When are you going?" she demanded.

"I was going at eight," he answered.

"Did I keep you against your will?" she asked.

"You kept me," he said gently.

She walked very fast, and it was not until they had reached the Porte d'Ostende that she spoke again.

"Why did you quarrel with Captain Bougival?" she demanded.

"You know perfectly well," he returned. "Bougival is insanely jealous.

He thinks that he has the right to be."

"He has no sort of right at all," she said hotly. "Surely you don't think he has."

"I can't tell," he said guardedly. "You seem to like him very much. He is an old friend and—oh, well, I suppose I did not offer the soft answer which might have turned away his wrath."

"You should have done so," she said.

He stopped in his promenade. "I shouldn't," he cried, "and I never will. Bougival was jealous, as he admits, and you know; and I declare, I was a thousand times more so. For what other reason do you suppose I threw aside all my national prejudices and was as eager as he to go out to the golf links with De Belleville as my second? And then when you found out you must blame me and punish me!"

"How did I punish you?" she asked.

"Didn't you walk back to the pavilion with him, ignoring me completely? And whose colors did you wear today? His, of course."

"Did you beg me to wear yours?" she said a little shyly.

He paused, for they had resumed their walk, and looked at her eagerly.

"Would you have worn my blue?" he asked.

"I don't know," she said, laughing. "How can one tell? Jacques Bougival gave me his, and the colors of Belgium are colors I love to wear, even though Belgium had nothing to do with them. Aren't you just a little impetuous, Don Quixote?"

"I am very miserable," he said.

"Why?" she demanded. "You won today in a most sensational way. If I were a man I should be very happy."

"That's only a little thing to win," he said. "When one might win so much more."

"Your match tomorrow, you mean?" she queried with seeming innocence.

"I'd forgotten about that," he said.

"You were running away," she said severely. "Do you want to spoil my tournament?"

"Do you want me to play?" he returned.

"You'll spoil everything if you go away before it's over," she replied. "Beside M. Marambot, of Brussels, two regular members of the club have entered, who are every bit as good as Captain Bougival. You may not win."

"I will if you wear my colors," he said, his heart thumping in a strange and unaccustomed way. "Will you, Nina?"

The girl smiled in the darkness. It was the first time he had called her Nina, and it was not in her heart to rebuke him.

"I am not sure that light blue is my color," she answered.

"You look beautiful in everything," he said.

"I want you to win," she said slowly, "and if you promise to beat M. Marambot I'll think about it. I'll wear blue, Mr. Paget. That's a bargain."

A hundred things surged through his mind. Usually he was adept at a gracefully turned compliment or tender, semitender nonsense such as women expect, but he found himself awkward as a boy, incapable, in the presence of the only woman he had loved, of saying what he felt. But over all there was a deep happiness. She was kind and would wear his colors.

"And when the game is over," she said, "you shall take me to that nice *confiseur's* where I saw you this afternoon with the Buxton girls. You didn't eat a single cake," she asserted. "I was watching you. Hadn't you an appetite?"

"I was never so perfectly miserable in my life," he said.

"It would please Isabel to hear you say that," she returned.

"It wasn't her fault," he cried. "She seemed a very jolly sporting sort of girl. It was you. I was thinking about you all the way to the shop and directly I entered it there you were with Bougival. That man seems to haunt me. I can't even think of that perfect day on the links without think-

ing of his scowls when we met him in the Grand Place."

"I'm afraid you have rather a bad temper," she said. "I hadn't an idea you were so vindictive. Would you like to know the real reason that when I found out about your quarrel, your stupid, childish quarrel, I walked back to the tennis court with him and then drove back to Bruges?"

"Very much," he returned.

"It was because I could trust you better than I could him. Poor Jacques is so very conceited and rather boastful. If I had walked back with you I think he would have lost his head and struck you. If that had happened I should have let you do as you chose. I am a Southern girl," she said, "and I could never like a man who took a blow. You wonder, perhaps, why I wrote to you tonight. It was to tell you just that. I have had plenty of time to tell him that if he tries to fight or do anything absurd he will suffer for it. The Governor is very strict since poor Pierre de Boismaison was killed at Courtrai last year, and I am too fond of Madame Bougival to see her son court-martialed."

"I wish I could be sure that you were not fond of her son," he said. The idea that she felt he was a safe, steady, dependable sort of man was not a very attractive one. He had never cared to play Major Dobbin's role in life.

"You haven't any right to say that," she cried.

"I have every right," he answered. "I suffer for this man, don't I? It is because you think his wounded vanity may break out that he is pampered while I am left to myself. I suppose if he frowns tomorrow you will take my colors off and wear his."

She laughed softly. "I believe of the two you are much the worse-tempered."

"I am," he said, a little ashamed of his outbreak. "I need very careful watching. If you are not kind, heaven only knows what may happen."

"You mustn't threaten me," she said.

"I'm not," he answered. "I'm suggesting a course which is the best for

all. I have mapped it out. You must let me be constantly near you; your restraining influence is needed."

"Your jailer?" she queried. "Is that the role assigned to me?"

"I wish you would be something more than that," he sighed, overcome by an unaccustomed timidity. He broke off as she stopped at the door of a large house they were passing. He had not noticed that they had turned down the street where she lived.

"You are not going in yet?" he pleaded.

She swung open half the great door leading to the covered porte-cochère and stood provokingly out of his reach.

"I must," she said. "It's terribly late and Miss Scott always gets anxious if I am out much after dark. You may call for me at two o'clock tomorrow if you like."

"If I like!" he repeated.

"Good night," he said. The door closed and he heard her footsteps echoing as she crossed the flagged walk, and finally die away. Then he made his way hotelward filled with the most perfect happiness that it had ever been his lot to experience. His soul sang within him.

XI

If Isabel Buxton had any doubts as to Paget's class as an exponent of lawn tennis, they were quite dispelled when she beheld M. Marambot, an idol of Brussels and Spa, go down to defeat before him. Marambot put up a gallant fight. He was staidier than Bougival and particularly adept at the now almost discarded net game. But Paget's placing left him few of the opportunities which he looked for, and from the start of the only two sets that were needed he had no chance at all. Marambot could not understand it. Not since he took up the game had two love sets been registered against him.

Had Isabel Buxton known that she was watching Viscount Mountcastle, of the Seventeenth Hussars, she would have known, with her gift for names and averages, that he had been twice a

runner-up for the championship, to be defeated, but not ingloriously, by the more brilliant of the Doherty brothers.

When he had changed from his flannels he sought out Nina. She had never looked so bright and animated, he thought. She held out her hand enthusiastically. "I'm proud of my colors," she cried.

"It's because you wore them that I won," he said softly.

"What about the truth compact between us?" she laughed. "For shame, Mr. Paget!"

He laughed, too. Nothing could stem the happiness that he felt when he was alone with her. "I hope you haven't forgotten tea and cakes under the shadow of St. Simon of the decimals?"

"Of course not," she said. "But let's take M. Marambot. He looks so terribly depressed. You owe him tea and cakes, at least. And Isabel Buxton hasn't had an opportunity to speak to that nice boy with the Trinity ribbon in his hat. Why shouldn't we play the part of a kindly Providence and ask them, too?"

He looked a little disappointed. "It's a charming idea," he returned. "They ought to be very grateful to you."

"I knew you wouldn't mind," she said.

"But I do," he answered. "I mind so much that I only consent under one condition."

"Which is—"

"That you come for a walk on the ramparts tonight. The wind is just rising, and after dinner there'll be all the breeze you want. Be kind."

"I suppose I must," she said. "I'll ask Isabel and her young man if you get M. Marambot."

Marambot accepted Paget's invitation. When he said that he was returning to Brussels by the eight o'clock train he was asked to dine at his opponent's hotel; but only when Paget had elicited by careful questioning that a very important engagement in the capital city rendered such a train the latest that he could take.

Punctuality, essentially a man's virtue, was treated with good-humored contempt by Nina Lloyd, as Paget soon came to discover. He had become intimately acquainted with all the houses that lay about the rampart end of the Rue de la Cloche before she appeared. She never betrayed any hurry of movement, or any consciousness that her unpunctuality might have disturbing effects.

"You have deceived me," she said as she greeted him. "There isn't enough wind stirring to make a ripple on the canals. I don't care much for walking unless half a gale is blowing."

"Fortunately, there's a seat," he said. "It isn't a bit cold. Let's sit there."

She allowed him to lead her to a little wooden rampart seat. He was wondering how, without offending her, he could broach the subject of the other man once mentioned by Miss Scott as a possible successful suitor, when she broke in upon his thoughts.

"What are you thinking about?" she demanded.

"You," he said instantly.

"I suppose you couldn't say anything else," she laughed.

"Not truthfully," he returned. "I was wondering if you'd be offended if I asked you something about your life in America."

"Try, and find out," she advised.

"I suppose you put in the ordinary sort of time out there that one does here—dinners, dances, house parties—"

"Exactly the same," she assented. "We have inherited all the pleasant vices of Europe."

"You must meet a lot of men," he said.

"Not so many as one does here," she said. "Our young men are so busy—much more industrious as a class than the ones here."

He sighed heavily.

"Is that all?" she demanded.

"Are you engaged?" he said.

"Isn't that rather an odd question?" she asked. "Really, Mr. Paget, I don't see that you have any right to ask."

"I have," he said stubbornly. "In a way, I have."

"How?" she said, and it seemed that her voice was cold.

"I love you," he declared simply. "I love you so much that if you are engaged to anyone else it will be the most terrible news I have ever heard."

He looked at her anxiously; but by no sign could he read what emotion, if any, had been raised by what he had told her.

"You see," he said, "I feel that I must know."

"And if you learned that I was engaged to someone in America or Captain Bougival, would you say I had behaved badly and ruined your life?"

He looked at her quietly for a few seconds. "I shouldn't say that," he returned, "because I shall always look back on the time I have known you as the one perfect month of my life. Please tell me. I think I have a right to know. If there is no such man I want to think I have a good fighting chance. If there is—"

"Well," she asked, and her voice was not very steady, "suppose there is such a man—what then?"

"Then I don't think I shall ever be perfectly happy again."

"I think you are exaggerating," she said.

"Then you have never loved anyone," he told her. "Nina, you are very cruel."

"How do you know I have never loved anyone?" she asked.

"Then it was true that you are engaged?" he asked.

"How swift you are to jump at a conclusion!" she retorted.

"If you knew how much your answer means," he said, "you would not fence with me now. I ask only to know if you are bound to another man."

"Not yet," she said almost shyly. "I'm not engaged, but I'm rather fond of a young man who"—she hesitated for a moment—"is blind."

For a moment her hand lay lightly in his and she whispered: "Why can't you see? Why are you so blind?"

In the realization of his supreme

happiness Paget was conscious more than anything else of a wonder, a strange, almost boyish, wonder, that this blessed thing should have been vouchsafed to him. A certain self-sufficiency, natural to the rich titled man of the world, whose career has been one having in it few elements of aught but success and few moments of the abasement of the humble-minded, was shorn from him when he learned that Nina Lloyd cared for him. His lips sought those he had craved for, and her eyes, the dearest in his world, looked into his with a tenderness which had an eloquence more beautiful than any speech. Never in life is there such an ecstasy as comes with the first great passion.

There passed between them the happy disjointed talk of lovers when exclamations are sentences and terms of endearment express depths of meaning intelligible to no one else.

"I used to think," he said presently, "that sometimes you didn't like me at all, even as a friend. How could I have guessed?"

"How could you have failed to?" she laughed. "Blind, blind boy, not to have seen that I tried not to let anyone know. It seemed to me that everyone must know that I felt glad when I saw you and made all sorts of little opportunities for you to come near me. It would have been easy enough to keep you away if I had wanted to. At first I tried to fight against it."

"Why?" he demanded.

She sighed. "I think I have a great capacity for unhappiness. I forget who wrote it, but sometimes I am haunted by the sentence, '*As-tu rêfléchi combien nous sommes organisés pour le malheur?*'"

"Never, never!" he cried. "*Comme nous sommes organisés pour le bonheur.*"

"Don't speak so reproachfully," she retorted. "I don't always feel gloomy, and never when I am with you."

"Then it won't be long before it's permanently banished," he said contentedly, "for soon I shall be with you always."

"See how my lord waxeth confident!" she laughed.

"It troubles me," he said more soberly, "that you should ever feel unhappy. If you were old and ugly and friendless there might be an excuse, but not with you, my beautiful darling. You and I have a great capacity for happiness. Surely you must feel it in your heart's heart!"

"I'm not always gloomy," she cried. "You know I enjoy life, but sometimes I think I am a pagan with a pagan's dread of impending fate. Perhaps that's why Hardy seems to me the truest living writer. Don't you remember how his men and women march blindly on looking often for happiness, to be met by the fate that nothing human can control? Fate has let me have so many of the little things I didn't want very much that I feel when I want happiness and you that it may step in and deny me everything."

"You aren't doubtful of me?" he asked anxiously.

"Nor of myself because I love you," she said tenderly, "but I'm rather a pagan at heart, dear, and—"

He stopped her with a flood of kisses. "I won't be made melancholy," he cried, "on the great day of my life. I see ahead more clearly than you. Fate is kind to us and we'll live happily ever afterwards."

"I'll think so, too," she returned brightly, "but I don't want to tell anyone about—"

She paused a minute half shyly.

"About our engagement?" he said. There was disappointment in his voice.

"Humor me," she pleaded. "It will make no difference to us, so why should we consider anyone else? My aunt would be immeasurably shocked, and as I am with her for a few weeks longer I don't want to disturb her. You don't mind?"

"My vanity is hurt," he laughed. "I wanted to show all other men that I had won the peerless damosel."

"I'm not a peerless damosel," she said. "And you mustn't place me on a pedestal."

"I shall," he asserted with determination.

"I shall topple off very quickly," she answered.

"You'll fall into my arms," he said.

"I'm there now," she returned.

"I wonder why," he said a little later, "your aunt dislikes me so much?"

"She thinks all Europeans are fortune hunters," the girl answered. "Otherwise she rather likes you. She has been led to believe that every other man she met on the Continent of Europe would be a count and all of them would be running after heiresses."

"She thinks I am after your money then. How do you know I am not?"

"I don't mind if you are," she cried contentedly. "What I have is yours."

"Keep it for dresses and pretty things for yourself, sweetheart," he whispered. "I have enough to pay the other bills. Did she think Bougival was also a seeker of fortunes?"

"Of course," she returned; "but in addition she thought I was fascinated by the glitter of uniforms. Frankly, I do like uniforms and gold lace and prancing chargers."

Paget thought with pride of his regiment, whose uniform was particularly fine and whose chestnut chargers delighted the eye. Theirs should be a military wedding, he decided, with a guard of honor from his own squadron lining the great avenue of oaks which led from the lychgate of St. Vian's church to its wonderful Early English porch. But he experienced something of a shock when he remembered that the wedding would take place on another continent and that she was shortly to start for her American home.

"When are you going back to America?" he asked.

"I want to be at Newport not later than the first of July. If I take one of the fast boats I shall not need to leave here for two weeks."

"In the matter of weddings, I suppose the bride's mother decides, doesn't she?"

"It's the custom," she admitted.

"Is your mother going to be *difficile*?" he asked.

She hesitated a moment. "I suppose I'd better tell you that she and I

don't get on very well. We make it a rule never to stay at the same places. Incompatibility of temper, I suppose."

She could not tell him that Mrs. Lloyd's unreasonable jealousy of her beautiful daughter was the sole cause, or that this had broken up their home. He would find that out later. It would probably suit Mrs. Lloyd to have her girl married and out of America. She could imagine her mother being particularly gracious to John Paget for that very reason. It had been one of the chief trials of her life that the mother whose beauty she had idolized had become, as the daughter grew to womanhood, so jealous that no longer was there even a pretense of affection between them. And a grief which had grown out of this was that Mr. Lloyd, in his pride and love for the wife so much younger than he, had grown to imagine, without ever having broached the subject to his daughter, that his wife was right when she said that the girl's headstrong disposition was the cause of the trouble of which he had divined so small a part. It was this friction at home which had made Nina Lloyd such a wanderer.

"I shan't like your mother," he said decidedly.

"You'll like my father," she said. "He's one of the delightful type of Southern gentlemen now fast dying out. Not a bit the kind they have on the stage, with the offensive headgear and love for mint juleps, but just a sweet, courteous, white-haired, perfectly charming man. You don't know anything about cotton, I suppose?" she added.

"Nothing," he returned. "I've seen it growing in Egypt and India, that's all."

"My father is one of the biggest cotton men in the South," she said. "He has offices in New York, Galveston and Mobile, with headquarters in New Orleans. I had a letter from him a week ago saying he was preparing to fight a ring of New Yorkers. Of course," she added with a smile, "you can't possibly understand how an old time Southern grower and broker resents any inter-

ference from Northerners. It fills him with horror." She sighed. "The North is getting very strong, though. It will win in the end. The North always wins everywhere."

"I wish I could help him," said Paget earnestly.

"So do I," cried the girl. "If I could I would be with him now. If I were a boy instead of a girl I should be useful. As it is, I could only be a foreign correspondence clerk, and probably not a very good one either. I may be prejudiced, but I don't think those Northern cotton men are playing quite the same straight, honest game that my father does."

"I'm afraid it's worrying you," he said.

She gave a delicious little sigh of contentment. "I'm too perfectly happy to worry about anything tonight," she confessed. "I'm glad there is no high wind. You have tamed my pagan longing for storms, and I wouldn't change the little timid breeze in the lime trees for anything in the cave of the winds. I feel very safe with you and as though I had suddenly dropped all my worries and troubles." Her tone changed. "I wonder what I should have done if you had gone away as you told Isabel Buxton you were going to do? Just in a little fit of pique you might have ruined everything. I see that I shall have to look after you very carefully."

"We are bound to one another by chains that nothing can break."

"If I were not a pagan at heart," she said slowly, "I shouldn't feel frightened at your boast. In that statement you defied Fate. I always pour out my libations to the unknown gods." She laughed more gaily, for her happiness would not permit her to feel more than a passing trace of despondency. "I always treat these unknown gods with great politeness and insert, mentally, at any rate, a clause which acknowledges their power."

"Strange child," he said, stroking her hair.

"Not strange," she answered, "but radiantly happy and grateful to my un-

known pantheon that I met you and loved you and that you loved me. And to think," she added pensively, "that I thought I should never love anyone! The thoughts of youth are wrong thoughts, aren't they? Don't you understand me?"

"Not always," he said, smiling.

"What a simpleton you are!" she cried. "I am discovering myself to you the whole time. All I do or say or think means only one thing—that I love you." As the Belfry rang out its eternal tune, she sprang to her feet.

"I have never been out so late before," she cried. "Poor auntie, if she isn't asleep, will certainly call on the police for assistance in finding me."

She raised her face to his. "There will never be in all our lives such another night as this. If anything unforeseen should happen I shall always feel that there is one remembrance nothing can take away from me." She looked up to the clear summer sky. "Not even those unknown gods up there."

He experienced a sense of vague uneasiness. It was more than strange, he thought, that on such a night she would admit that there were evil forces powerful enough to work harm.

"I wish you would banish that from your mind, dear," he said gently. "I come from a part of England where the peasants are superstitious and believe in the evil eye and second sight and all the things modern education laughs at, and I'm rather superstitious, too."

She looked at him with added interest. "Don't you ever feel afraid?" she asked.

"Not tonight," he said. "I feel as strongly as though I were a god, knowing futures and pasts, that happiness and not misery is in store for us."

She clung to him for a moment without speaking, perfectly trustful and happy in his love. "I don't doubt you, darling," she whispered. "I only feel that suddenly I have discovered that there is one thing I cannot bear to lose." She slipped her arm in his.

"Come," she said imperiously, "let us walk home quickly."

"Walk!" he cried, laughing. "I have wings tonight."

XII

THE next morning Paget called at the *pension* for her and assumed instantly an air of possession which was far from displeasing her. He called, he said, at an early hour in order to spend the morning in an expedition to the little Dutch town of Sluys and lunch there preparatory to taking part in the tennis tournament at Assebrouck. Secretly they were both inclined to regret that there was anything which compelled them to mingle with their fellows when they might be alone together.

From the quaint little village of Sint Anna ter Muiden they walked by the dunes to Sluys and finally came to the hotel restaurant which had been recommended to them. Paget set himself to order a luncheon worthy of the occasion and came back from his parley with the proprietor to find the girl sitting by the open window reading an English illustrated weekly magazine. He looked over her shoulder, to see that she was gazing at a page of illustrations of his father's western residence, St. Vian's Castle. It was one of a series of great houses which the paper was publishing week by week. For a moment he wondered whether this was not merely a means of letting him know that John Paget was discovered.

The girl looked up at him with a smile. "The proprietress thought I might like to look at an English paper not yet a month old." She turned her attention to the St. Vian pictures and beckoned Paget to sit by her.

"Listen to this," she said, and read aloud a glowing description of the historic old mansion. She read for a while in silence.

"The Earl of St. Vian," she continued presently, "was formerly a captain in the Royal Horse Guards Blue, is a Grand Cross of the Bath and the patron of fifteen livings. Beside St. Vian's

Castle he owns Mountcastle Manor in Gloucestershire, Brampton Hall near York, Trevenose House in Park Lane and Airdramoor in Perthshire, noted for its grouse. His heir, Viscount Mountcastle, of the Seventeenth Hussars, is stationed in India with his regiment. Father Trevenose, of the Order of the Blessed Meditation, is the only other living son." She looked up quickly. "Isn't that the gaunt ascetic we met in Bloomsbury?"

"The same," he answered.

"I feel I know the family intimately," she laughed, putting down the paper. "At times I feel thoroughly in sympathy with Socialists," she cried. "What does Lord St. Vian want with all those houses?"

"How many has the beloved Carnegie?" he demanded.

"You shall not drag me into an argument," she exclaimed. "I insist that he has too many homes. It makes my eyes ache to read of them and see them reproduced for us humbler creatures to envy."

"Let me kiss the ache away," he cried. The stout proprietor entered the room while he was pursuing this pleasing course. He was not greatly perturbed. He had often remarked profoundly that all Englishmen were mad.

Assebrouck was reached at four o'clock. The two last games were played and Paget was proclaimed the winner of the tournament. For one hour he had the delight of playing with Nina against Isabel Buxton and the Trinity undergraduate. He was in a joyous mood. What, he wondered, would Nina, who deplored the lack of good grass courts in her own country of fierce summer heats, say to those at St. Vian, which had been rolled and cut with regularity since lawn tennis began and had been tended for a century before that? Never had he been so grateful for his high estate, his splendid homes and his ancient lineage as when he looked at the girl and realized how she would adorn them. There would be many other surprises for her, he reflected with a vivid, boyish joy. There had been no mention in the London

periodical of the fact that his grandmother had been a lady of the Montmorency family, and had brought to her English lord a French Renaissance chateau in Lorraine, built in 1561 by Philibert de l'Orme.

And if, as a woman, she appreciated more than he the *entrée* to the most exclusive society in Rome, society which does not find itself in the foreign editions of Sunday papers, his sister, Princess Castelazzi, who adored him, would love her, if not for her own sweet sake, at least for that of her brother. She was of the Castelazzi who had given popes to Rome, who looked upon kings as their equals and had among them that Giacomo Castelazzi who died in the waters of Lepanto by the side of Don John of Austria on that day fatal to Ottoman supremacy, when Spain, at the bidding of a pope, forgot her ancient grievance and, allied with Venice and Genoa, fought against the enemy of their common faith.

He wondered what his father would say when he learned of his heir's engagement. Not usually afraid of the Earl's mordant wit, he dreaded any cynical allusions to his adventures. There was something too sacred in the matter to permit any jesting. That Nina would instantly win her way to the peer's affection he did not for a moment doubt; but he dreaded to put down the facts either too baldly or with too great an enthusiasm upon paper. He wished he could spare three days out of his happy hours to acquaint his father personally, but the sacrifice was not to be considered.

As he walked toward her *pension* he watched the girl very closely. Assuredly she was thoroughbred enough even to please his fastidious parent. Mary Castelazzi, he knew, would rave about the purity of her profile.

"The ramparts tonight?" he hazarded.

She shook her head. "You've made me neglect poor auntie shamefully," she said. "Tonight I have promised to help her with some tracings."

"I shall expect you to walk on the ramparts tomorrow morning at seven,"

he returned. "The trees are delightful and the Lac d'Amour and the Beuginage never looked so charming."

"Very well, my tyrant," she agreed—"if I can wake up in time."

As he walked contentedly to his hotel in the Rue Nord du Sablon the girl was summoned by the man of all work, Clement, to the little room where Madame Verhoest usually received those of her guests with whom she was on intimate terms. To her surprise Miss Scott, betraying signs of unusual agitation, was sitting alone.

"My dear," she cried, "I did not want you to go into our room until you knew."

"Knew what?" demanded Nina, astounded at her excitement.

"Your mother is here," she said.

"Is anything the matter with father?" cried the girl, who could think of nothing less serious which would bring her mother from early summer gaieties.

"She will only say that she wants to see you alone. She is never communicative to me," said Miss Scott, with an aggrieved air. As the plain member of her family, Miss Scott had never been appreciated at her true worth. A shy, awkward, delicate child, she had seemed of another race than her three sisters, of whom the most beautiful, the one she most adored, was now waiting in the room above.

A trifle paler than usual Nina walked resolutely into the sitting room and faced the tall, splendid woman there. They were honest enough not to make false affectations of the love which had never existed between them. Nina took Mrs. Lloyd's hand as she might take that of a stranger.

XIII

PAGET had long known that Nina Lloyd was passionately fond of rare flowers. All that was rich in coloring and rare in perfume was a delight to her. Not less fond of the little flowers of the field because she loved their complexer sisters of hothouses she was nevertheless strangely drawn to the

orchids. Possessing some knowledge of this family because of the famous collection of St. Vian, Paget had learned by chance that a great English firm of orchid importers and growers had acres of glass just outside the Porte Marechale at Bruges. From their Hertfordshire nurseries Lord St. Vian's head gardener had frequently bought specimens, and one, *Odontoglossum*, was named after the estate. It would be fitting, thought Paget, if the girl should unwittingly learn to admire these orchids named after her future home. He had ordered a number, and on the morning he was to take her to the ramparts awoke betimes to procure them. It was only a quarter past six when he rang the bell of the *pension*. Blinking, heavy-footed Marie, the maid servant, answered his call. "Put these," he whispered, slipping a franc into her hand, "in Mademoiselle Lloyd's room, so that she sees them when you wake her up."

Marie, who spoke little French, nodded amiably and went off to do her errand. She was halfway up the stairs before she remembered that quite suddenly mademoiselle and the strange lady, her mother, had left by the eight o'clock train on the previous evening. Love affairs had little interest for Marie; she would fulfill her part, she reflected sagely, if she gave them to the aunt of mademoiselle. Accordingly, Miss Scott was waked out of her sleep to find a room half full of strange, wonderful orange and purple flowers.

At seven Paget waited for the coming of Nina. At half past seven he ventured to ring the bell. Miss Scott answered him. She looked very worn and gray and old. "Nina has gone," she said. "She left with her mother last night." She looked at the young man more kindly than she had ever done before. "I fear it is bad news for you, too." She handed him a letter. "Nina wanted me to give this to you. It may explain things that I cannot understand."

She closed the door gently.

He looked at the letter scarcely understanding. He was standing in the

street. Work people passing him gazed a little curiously at the young Englishman holding a letter in a hand that trembled. He sensed instantly that there was disaster in it for him and walked, almost ran, to his hotel and shut himself in his room. For a time he could not bring himself to open it despite the intensity of his desire to know its contents. He repeated dully, to ears which heard a flat, toneless voice that seemed to belong to another man, "She has gone! She has gone!"

Then the Belfry carillon rang out the lilting refrain of the "Blue Danube" and brought him back to his senses with a shock that seemed almost physical. Quickly he cut the azure envelope of a tone and texture she invariably used in writing to him and took out the letter. It was dated at seven o'clock of the previous day. Written, indeed, not half an hour after he had left her there in the porte-cochère with a promise to spend a blessed hour before breakfast was ready and their world well awake. Never had such a sense of despondency settled upon him as he read:

It is only an hour since I bade you good-bye, but my eyes are tired with crying and my heart is numbed from the anguish of having to leave you forever without even a farewell. My dear, my dear, if ever you loved me and trusted me, love and trust me in my dark hour, the hour when I leave you. I can fancy you reading this and asking yourself what has sent me away if I don't want to go. Do you remember the two last lines of Lovelace's verses, "I could not love thee, dear, so much, loved I not honor more"? There lies the key to it, or as much as I may tell you. Something has happened which makes it imperative that I return instantly to my own country and never see you again or receive any letters from you. I pray you, if you have any pity for me, not to try to make me break an unalterable resolve. I want to think of you in the waste years to come as you stood smiling when I promised to come with you along the ramparts in the morning, and not as you would look if you tried to force me to tell you, face to face, what I am putting down here, and I had for honor's sake to remain dumb. One little month of love in a lifetime is all the comfort I shall have. It is bitter, my darling, for those unknown gods have struck me down in the moment of my woman's triumph, and I must go away leaving you to wonder if, after all, I was true. Dear, you must never

doubt me. I want to think of you as one of those who have not seen and yet have believed. Good-bye.

Never once did Paget, as he read and reread the letter, hoping to glean some meaning which would help him to some decisive action, doubt the girl's love for him. The deep sincerity in which it was written communicated itself to him. Had she been a girl of less uncommon mold he would have felt more readily that there was some obstacle which might yield to their united courage. But Nina to him represented clever, brilliant womanhood capable of judging for herself and judging rightly as to what was inevitable and what merely a temporary difficulty. There was plainly something against which she did not wish him to fight. To fight, even to go down to defeat, would have been bad enough, but to accept blindly a sentence which he could not but deem unjust almost maddened him.

To believe what she said without seeing a proof, yes, he could do this. She had inspired him with a love which made this simple. But to know that she was leaving with her mother, whom he vaguely feared, to sacrifice herself for someone else while he was given the lot of submitting unprotesting, raised in him a violent opposition. There must be some way, he reflected, whereby his ingenuity and wealth could get the better of circumstances.

Miss Scott declined to see him when he called at the *pension*. She would give no message and write no note. The old Flemish, Clement, pocketed a five-franc piece and told all he knew. It was merely that Miss and Mrs. Lloyd had driven to the station and their luggage was sent by the *grande viellese* two hours later.

Clement's five-franc piece gave him an uncommonly good memory. He was certain that the baggage was labeled for Antwerp.

Paget looked at his watch and cursed the ill luck that sent off a train to the great port of Belgium even as he gazed at the dial. There would be an hour and a half to wait! He drove to the

agent of the Red Star Line and learned that the *Finland* sailed on the afternoon tide. A telegram to Antwerp did not disclose the Lloyds' names among the passengers, but he felt certain that this was the boat they would take.

In the train he hardly knew why he had taken the journey. To try to see her was breaking faith in a way, and yet what years of misery might be saved them both if only he could see her and talk to her. He would not, he assured himself a dozen times, try to disobey her, were he not hopeful that from his fresh viewpoint some escape might be seen. She had spoken of her father's daring speculations. Might it not be, he thought, that it was merely a matter of money? If that were all his fortune would surely suffice. Enormous rentals had piled up during the ten years his father had been retired by his illness from the world of fashion. He himself had rarely spent his ample allowance, and next year most of the London ground rents fell due. Only the Dukes of Westminster and Bedford, the Grosvenors and the Russells, owned more of the valuable heart of the great city. If his father demurred there were plenty of money lenders who would honor his paper, for nothing Lord St. Vian could do would break the entail.

The train was late. He hurried along the cab ranks and picked out what he thought was the fastest horse. The reward for reaching the Red Star dock was sufficient to make the driver thread his way through narrow streets and broad boulevards at a pace which was reckless to onlookers but deplorably slow to the impatient passenger.

The vessel was not at her customary dock, but lying out in the stream. He knew her instantly by the narrow white bands on her twin black funnels. The decks were crowded. Pushing his way through the crowds of curious onlookers he came upon the dock superintendent.

"When does she sail?" he demanded.

"Now," returned the official laconically. "Hear that bell? That's the signal for visitors to come ashore in the tender."

The man had in his hands some very powerful binoculars. When he perceived how badly the news seemed to affect his questioner he passed the glasses to him.

"Want to have a look?" he asked kindly.

Paget turned them onto the saloon deck where groups of men and women were bidding farewell one to another. Almost instantly Nina, dressed in the white serge costume he knew so well, came into focus. She seemed to be talking very earnestly to a tall man in blue, who wore one of the felt hats which stamped him to the European's eye as an American. So good were the lenses of the glasses that his face could be seen distinctly. There was action, everything but sound, and like nothing Paget could think of so much as a moving picture scene.

Suddenly he saw the girl hold both her hands to the man, who seemed to be speaking something of import. Then the man stooped down and kissed her and hurried out of vision. For some seconds Nina stood motionless and then slowly went below decks.

The superintendent sauntered up to Paget. "Did you see her?" he demanded in jocular strain.

Paget handed back the binoculars with a murmured thanks. "Yes," he said in a strangely staccato voice, "I saw her."

The superintendent stared after him curiously as he walked, white-faced, from the dock. "I wish I hadn't been so free with my glasses," he muttered.

For some hours Paget walked aimlessly about the Antwerp streets, torn with a complexity of emotions which left him finally physically weak. His will to trust her implicitly and believe that she was the loyal, true girl he had pictured underwent, as he fed his mind upon the scene of her farewell with the stranger, a change that might well be pardoned in a lover whose happiness had been torn from him and who had witnessed what he felt was unbelievable treachery. How little he knew her, he thought, and what incidents might there not be in her past life which

rendered this scene but a logical sequence to affairs with other men! By degrees his passion of grief and anger subsided and the words of her letter burnt into his brain brought to him a certain sense of shame. He had doubted her. He had shown himself to be of little faith.

He was conscious at last of bodily weakness and a mental fatigue that had never been his before. He found himself outside a restaurant in the Place de Meir; it was one of the cafés outside which in the summer are little green tables and shrubs in barrels covered from sun and rain by awnings. He paused for a moment. The place seemed crowded and he was in no mood for company. One table there seemed to be at which was seated only one man; to this he made his way and sat down heavily. His *vis-à-vis* was hawk-faced and dark, with high shoulders and eyes sunken in his head. He looked up with a trace of annoyance when he saw Paget, for he had chosen this untenanted corner for solitude's sake and welcomed no interruption. When he perceived that Paget paid no sort of attention to him, but seemed rather unconscious of his presence, he observed him more closely. He saw a tall, straight-featured man tanned by Indian suns to bronze, well dressed and obviously of the wealthy classes. And round the blue eyes he saw black rings which might have marked a bout of dissipation. Jarvis Thorne was certain that his neighbor had been drinking and was now suffering from its effects. He watched him gulp his whiskey and seltzer firm in the belief that here was a man determined to turn a bad day into a worse night.

Presently he turned to look at some other guests, when he felt that subconscious certainty that he was being stared at. It was with almost a shock that he beheld Paget leaning on his elbows staring at him. With the irritation which is born of such a stare he spoke quickly.

"You seem very much interested in me."

"I have never been so much inter-

ested in a man as in you," he wastold. He knew instantly from the clear, precise tone that the other had not been drinking. There was an evenness in this stranger's voice which showed that he had not spoken idly.

"Why?" snapped Thorne.

"One reason," said Paget, "is that I have never fought with a stronger inclination to reach over a table and strangle a man."

"You must be mad," said Thorne angrily.

"God!" cried Paget wearily. "I think I am or shall be."

Thorne looked at him perplexed. He had never seen the other before, and yet there could be no doubt that Paget thought he knew him. He made a motion to rise, but the other restrained him.

"Don't," said he. "I shan't do anything silly or violent. It was only for a moment I felt like that."

"See here," said Thorne, "you mean something of which I don't understand a particle. There's no doubt about your sincerity, but you're dead wrong. Now, honestly, who do you think I am?"

"You are the man who kissed her," said Paget.

Thorne flushed easily and he coughed harshly.

"What the devil do you mean?" he cried.

"I saw it all," said Paget. "She held out both her hands to you and then you kissed her."

Thorne spoke very sternly. "I resent your mention of such a thing," he said. "What happened when you were spying on the *Finland* was the most sacred moment of my life. Who are you?"

Paget's laugh had little joy in it.

"Until last night I was engaged to her," he said. "I followed her here to find out why she had to go to America, and I came in time to see you kiss her." There was no trace of anger in his voice now. That had passed away—he found himself wondering why.

"And you thought her disloyal to you?"

"I was engaged to her yesterday. She broke it off and I saw a stranger kiss her." He asked almost entreatingly: "What am I to think?"

"Nina Lloyd," answered Thorne, "would never be disloyal to anyone. I met her by accident at luncheon to-day with her mother. We are very old friends, boy and girl friends, and I came to see her off. I asked her to kiss me and she of her kindness kissed me because within a few months I shall be dead. Are you going to think her disloyal because she kissed a poor devil who will be under the grass before Christmas? You needn't look incredulous," he said. "If you were a physician I could convince you. It's tuberculosis in an advanced stage. Man, I shouldn't jest about death!"

"Were you ever engaged to her?" Paget demanded.

"Never," he said simply. "She wouldn't have me." He laughed a little bitterly. "God knows, I've asked her often enough. I never heard of her being engaged to anyone until she told me today why she was returning to New York."

"She told you that?" cried Paget eagerly.

Thorne answered very deliberately. "She told me she was returning to marry Adolf Erbach—Erbach, the Wall Street magnate who has been cornering cotton."

Paget said nothing. Thorne saw him grip the rounded edges of the table with both hands. "Poor devil!" he muttered.

"Wasn't her father speculating in cotton?" he asked presently of Thorne.

"Erbach has squeezed him dry. Drought in Western Texas; shortage everywhere. Lloyd's firm will fail."

"She told you that?" demanded Paget.

"It's in the papers," said Thorne; "everyone knows it."

"Why is she marrying him?" asked Paget, looking very hard at the man across the table.

The American hesitated for a moment. "I suppose Erbach will let up on her father," he answered.

Paget noted the slight pause, the first time that the man opposite him had not answered instantly. It fitted in with the conviction he felt that the other had become possessed of the real reason, the reason he had hesitated to tell. "There is something more than that," he said quietly. "You have known her a long while, you say?"

"Since she was ten and I was fourteen," he returned.

"Then you know she wasn't the girl to be frightened or coerced. And you know—no, how should you?—that she clung to the idea of happiness too fondly to want to lose it. She has not had a very happy life altogether and we planned like children all the wonderful things we were going to do. I tell you this, which is a very sacred memory to me, because I want you to realize that there is much deeper meaning in it than you would make out. Would she," he cried passionately, "have talked about our future life as she did and written me the letter she did if she had been willing to throw it all up to save even her father's money? He was an old man; he had lived his life and ours was only beginning. Oh, I know you think it may be selfish to talk like this, but what would you do if you had had a glimpse of paradise and then lost it? Life owed us happiness."

The American moved uneasily in his seat. The terrible earnestness of the other man moved him more than he cared to admit. "I don't see what I am to do," he said a little lamely.

"You can tell me what she told you—" said Paget.

"What I heard was told to a dead man," returned the other. "She broke down. I was a sort of brother, she said, and there isn't a woman living, self-reliant as ever she may be, who doesn't need someone to tell her miseries to sometimes."

"Did she make any mention of me?" cried Paget.

"No," said Thorne, "but instinctively I knew there was another man, a man whom she loved." He frowned a little as though in doubt. "I wish I

knew what was the best thing to do. What I heard was almost under seal of the confessional, as it were."

"Listen to me," said Paget quietly. "Here are we two men who love her and ought to be able to help her. I have lived, it seems to me, many lives to-night. There is nothing left of the mad, jealous beast that was I an hour ago. I know only that I must help her. There is always some way. I have a profession; I can break away from it tomorrow. I have money; it can be used to help her father if money it is he needs."

"It's more than that," cried Thorne. "You are right in thinking that she told me all. Money is no good. I nearly broke down, too. I have always hated her mother, damn her! She gets off scot free while the girl pays." He covered his face with his hands and leaned for a minute on the little round table. When he looked up Paget could see the traces of tears. "I'm not very strong now," he said, almost apologetically, "and I haven't the control of myself I used to have when I rowed in the Harvard boat. When she told me all about it I broke down and cried like a child. She was being led to the slaughter by her mother. God, what a mother! Here is the whole thing in a nutshell:

"Erbach has a hold over Mrs. Lloyd, letters and a damn fool diary written years ago—enough for a divorce. Old Lloyd—he must be nearly seventy—has a faith in his wife which is like a saint's reverence for God. If Nina doesn't bow beneath the yoke, the letters and diary will be published in New York. If Mr. Lloyd isn't indicted for killing Erbach he will die of a broken heart. Erbach knows the risk he is taking and Nina knows it, too. The Lloyds are originally from Charleston, and you've heard perhaps what Charleston pride is. You are on one side of the balance and her father and her mother's honor on the other. Do you wonder they weigh you down?"

"She's right," he answered, simply bewildered at a series of events which offered no solution. And even in the

moment of profound despondency his heart thrilled with the pride of loving and being loved by such a woman.

"The bridegroom's present will be a vanity box of gold containing exactly twenty letters and a little morocco-bound diary he gave her mother." Thorne laughed bitterly. "He knows that the Lloyds are too deeply attached to their faith to seek a divorce. One pays for one's church."

Thorne's temperature was rising and a flood of the irritability of the tubercular came over him. "Can't you think of something?" he cried. "You're not a poor devil with less than a lung and a few months to live. If I were well and strong not hell itself should stop me from getting even with him!"

Paget glanced at him with some surprise. But when he noted the bright, febrile eye, the labored breathing and the red over the cheekbone he said nothing.

"I thought there was nothing to be done," continued Thorne, "but you are right; we must help her. Can't you think of anything?" he asked appealingly.

"Listen to me," said Paget quietly. "This man is in Europe now?"

"I saw it in the *Herald*," answered Thorne. "He will get back in time for his wedding, though." He took the paper from his pocket and looked through the columns devoted to Americans abroad. "Yes, here it is," he said. "Mediterranean, Adriatic and the usual thing."

"Do you suppose he has got those letters with him?" demanded Paget.

"It's more than likely," said Thorne. "He has safes and secretaries and wireless aboard. In fact, he does all his business in summer from his yacht, the *Gay Heather*. Why?"

"Why shouldn't we get them?" asked Paget slowly.

Thorne looked at the other with a certain scorn. "Do you suppose that a man like Erbach would leave things lying around? Or, even if he did, could we disguise ourselves as able seamen or even stewards and purloin them? And

if we did, could we get away? It's a childish idea."

The thought of action in a measure dispelled Paget's gloom. "Don't croak," he said. "Will you join me?"

A trifle ashamed of his petulance, Thorne held out his hand. "In the forlornest of hopes or the most wildcat schemes I am yours."

"Good!" cried Paget. "When can you come to London with me? By the early mail boat from Ostend tomorrow? It can't be the Harwich route because I must get my baggage from Bruges."

"Any time you say," said Thorne, "and anywhere." His spirits were rising.

Paget consulted a time-table. "Your train leaves here tomorrow morning at half past five. I can just catch a train to Bruges now. Will you meet me on the quay at Ostend tomorrow?"

"I won't fail," said Thorne.

Paget addressed him eagerly. "If we fail to carry out the scheme that's simmering in my head it will be because luck is against us."

Thorne beheld him hail a passing cab and drive away in a species of bewilderment. Life owed him, so physicians told him, only a few months of existence. He was well off, without near relatives, and was purposing to pass what days should be his in the snows of the Alps. It was a plan easily altered. He would follow, instead, the only man he had ever envied and see whether the two of them might not accomplish something for Nina Lloyd.

The excitement of the day brought Thorne a wretched night. He slept badly, coughing incessantly, and was white and worn when he joined Paget on the Ostend wharf. For the time he was content to lie back in a deck chair with eyes closed. Paget was alarmed at his look of illness. The tubercular patient, for the reason that his disease is not so readily apparent to the layman, rarely receives the sympathy that is accorded to manifestations of less serious conditions. They were in sight of Dover Castle before he betrayed any animation. Then, the

rest having revived him, he sat up more cheerfully. Paget set himself to broach his scheme.

"Do you know anything about yachting?" he asked. "Or yachts?"

"My father was once commodore of the New York Yacht Club," said the other, "and ever since I was a kid I have tinkered with marine engines." He smiled more cheerfully. "I took out a patent condenser when I was fifteen. It made no money because it wouldn't live up to its promises, but it shows you my good intentions. Why?"

Paget passed him a copy of the *Field*. "Look at that advertisement," he said — "the one with the photograph."

Thorne looked at it closely. "Seems a nice boat," he commented. "Turbines of the Parsons type, built last year and can make eighteen knots. What about it?"

"I must," said Paget, "run down to my home for two days. When I come back I want to find the yacht all ready for us. It says it is ready to put in commission. I wired from Bruges that I would take it providing it was satisfactory. Will you attend to it for me?"

"It will cost a whole lot of money," said the American.

Paget hesitated a moment. "I don't want to seem to be offensive," he hazarded, "but I will leave you enough money to carry out this plan. It's my picnic, you must remember."

Thorne grinned cheerfully. "We'll see about that," he said. "I'll have her ready if she's any good. Suppose she isn't!"

"There are others," said Paget. "The bad season has hit lots of the yachtsmen and the mud berths at Southampton are full of good boats."

"We are going after Erbach, then?" demanded Thorne.

Paget nodded. "I have his complete itinerary here. I wired to the Paris *Herald* last night. It seems the beast combines business with pleasure in whatever he does and is reported to be forming a sulphur combine in Sicily. I hadn't a faint idea there was any sulphur in the land where Theocritus used

to sing, but the *Herald* says there is." He paused for a minute. "Did she," he asked a little nervously, "tell you when the marriage was to take place?"

"In September," Thorne told him. "There's plenty of time, old man. Are the details of this scheme fixed up yet?"

"Only the main idea is sketched out. I have a tremendous train journey to and from my home, and by the time I join you at Southampton I hope to have it all worked out. It's a bit risky," he said. "I'm not sure if you ought to embark blindly without knowing all about it."

"Forget it," laughed Thorne. "I am without ties. If I am disgraced I shall glory in it and die like a blessed little hero. I've always envied the boy who stood on the burning deck and was frazzled to slow music. Have you any people to disgrace?"

Paget betrayed a certain uneasiness. There would be a fight with Lord St. Vian, he feared, but whatever his father might say would not be sufficient to dissuade him from making the attempt he had determined upon.

In the course of the long journey from Paddington to the West of England he could think of no excuses to put before the Earl which logically promised success. He was aware that his own inner feelings as to the probable outcome would have little force when pitted against the Earl's questioning. His father was warned by telegram of his coming and passed the wire over to Dr. Bagot, his resident physician.

The doctor read it and handed it back. "I am glad," was all he permitted himself to say.

"You fear you are going to lose your patient?" asked the Earl.

"I could wish you were stronger," answered the other.

"What tact you possess!" said His Lordship, smiling with a suspicion of weariness. "But I like the truth better when it applies to me."

"I think it is just as well that Lord Mountcastle remain at home for a while," returned Dr. Bagot.

"Say nothing to him about my con-

dition," warned the Earl. "I will tell him what I think fit. We are old, Bagot, and have had our fun, and mustn't ask the young to watch us pay for it." He sighed. "I shall be glad to have the boy back again, though."

Lord St. Vian listened without comment to the long and involved story which his son told him. There was something in it which appealed to a latent sense of romance in him. Here were two young knight-errants setting out in fifteenth century style to fight for their lady. As in Dürer's masterpiece, Death rode by the side of one knight. He was silent for a long while after Mountcastle had finished. Aware that his health was in a very poor state, he had waited impatiently for his son to return home on a long leave from his regiment. Then when the engagement with Mildred Heronhurst was broken off he had cheerfully consented to let him travel and find some sort of solace, hoping that in a little while he would come back to the castle.

In his early life Lord St. Vian had been one of the picturesque peers of the mid-Victorian epoch. None of the aristocracy had aroused greater heart-burning in the ruffled minds of radical reformers than he. He was invested with a reputation for dare-deviltry that was not wholly warranted; but his love of high play, and the fact that he was twice an owner of a Derby winner and had won the Grand Military thrice and had never made any pretensions to even the mildest kind of righteousness, had filled the great Nonconformist conscience of his country with the bitterest prejudice against him. During his ten years of illness he had had leisure to reflect that the reputation he had won was not one of which he need be proud. He made no excuses to anyone, because he felt that the Trevenoses needed to make none, but he asked himself every day what kind of a man he would have been if he had married the woman whose miniature he treasured.

And while Mountcastle waited eagerly for what his father might say, his father was filled with a memory which softened his heart and banished the

objections that had arisen during his son's narrative.

At last he smiled kindly at the younger man. "Do as you like," he said. "No one will welcome her more truly than I."

When Dr. Bagot learned that Mountcastle was setting off for a long yachting cruise he evinced some distress. "Have you told him," he asked the Earl, "that your health is in such a precarious condition that he may never see you again?"

"My dear Bagot," cried the other a little impatiently, "I am taking the risk and Mountcastle is not to know anything about it. There are very special reasons why he must go now. I should merit perdition if I tried to stop him. Ah, Bagot," he sighed, "I wish age sat more gracefully upon me! Don't you remember when there was youth and springtime in your blood, too?"

The old physician shook his head. "That was a long while ago," he said slowly.

"I think of it still," said the Earl, "and that's one of the reasons I won't have the lad dissuaded."

"I don't understand," cried the other.

"God never gave you youth," said Lord St. Vian pityingly.

XIV

THE *Chaser*, the turbine yacht jointly owned by Jarvis Thorne, of New York, and John Paget, of London, as her papers read, steamed into La Cala at Palermo on a brilliant night of early July. Lying across the harbor by the Porto Salvo was Adolf Erbach's great steam yacht *Gay Heather*.

It was half past nine and a very dark night when a few days later Paget, Thorne, Trevick and Captain Penfold drew alongside the great yacht which loomed huge and mysterious in the shadows. No one barred their approach or seemed aware that they had gained the deck. At the entrance to the main saloon aft a steward met them. Erbach received few visitors, and no newspaper men, so the servant

experienced some alarm lest he should be blamed for not preventing their boarding the vessel. He had been sleeping.

"Is Mr. Erbach aboard?" demanded Thorne.

"Have you an appointment?" asked the man. "Mr. Erbach receives no one without appointments."

"He will see me," retorted the American. "Tell him I must have his signature to an important document."

Erbach received the message impatiently. He was sitting at a table poring over a huge railroad map. Within a day or so he knew the American consul was to call relative to a business matter, but that he should choose ten o'clock at night struck him as unreasonable. He hesitated for a moment. "Send him in," he snapped.

Paget followed his friend into the cabin, which was fitted up in much the same rococo style which distinguished Erbach's Fifth Avenue home. A safe built into a partition, a secretary's desk with a typewriter upon it and the map occupying almost the whole of the table at which he sat gave a business-like appearance to the apartment.

Paget fastened his eyes on the other eagerly. Erbach was a man of middle size but enormously broad, with a big head and a bull neck. His features were bold, his mouth large and cruel and his small, dark eyes were famed for the effect they produced upon those who tried to cross swords with him. He was well dressed in a suit of blue serge, and a single diamond blazed upon the little finger of a hand whose size should not have been accentuated. In every aspect of the man conscious power was written. He had battled with the big men, and if he had not beaten them he had compelled them to take him into their councils. One of the boldest of stock gamblers, he had years ago, when he was merely a small gambler making a living by "scalping" small fluctuations in prices, set himself to attain eminence in this field of his chosen endeavor. When a great speculator manipulated market prices in the Sugar and Gas "pools"

Erbach was close enough to him to profit. And when, at the whisper of the man he admired, Northern Pacific stock went up to a thousand dollars a share in a day, Erbach was not of those who lost.

But for five or six years now he had not needed to ally himself with anyone except as an equal. His adventures into the corn and cotton markets had made him feared by the biggest of them. Unknown to any but his secret agents, he was at the present moment, while apparently engaged in making a trip in his yacht, endeavoring to put through a great railway deal which would mean more than any of his past triumphs. He and Harriman had commenced business in very much the same way, and he was not too ambitious to see himself bracketed some day with the two great railroad men of his country. Then would come the greatest struggle of all. Well, he was the youngest of them, had the best health and could see no weakness through which they could penetrate his financial armor. It was while he was making his plans for this Napoleonic enterprise that Thorne's message interrupted him.

Neither Paget nor Thorne felt any desire to speak. They gazed at the man they had tracked so long, with a silent contentment that was construed by the other into the natural respect or diffidence a consulate clerk would have in his presence.

"Well?" he ejaculated, raising his eyes.

There was no answer.

"You are from the consul, I suppose?" he demanded.

Thorne answered him. "No," he said.

Erbach's manner became a little less brusque. "You've come about that subscription to the Sailors' Hospital? I will send a cheque to Mr. Brand. You'll forgive me if I am too busy just now to talk, won't you?"

"I never heard of Mr. Brand or his hospital," returned Thorne slowly.

Erbach looked up more searchingly. "Are you newspaper men?"

Again Thorne shook his head.

"Your manner is very strange," cried Erbach.

"Our errand is stranger," retorted Thorne.

"What is it, then?" the other snapped.

"You are engaged to be married to Miss Lloyd."

"My private affairs don't concern you."

"On the contrary, more than you think," returned Thorne, with a show of politeness. "You won her consent by holding over her head the letters written to you by her mother, together with the diary she kept during a yachting trip and sent to you. With true chivalry you sent her a specimen page, demanding her daughter as the price of its sale to a New York paper."

"I utterly decline to listen to you," shouted Erbach. "I'll have you thrown off my boat."

But he found Paget standing directly before the electric bell. For a moment he stared at him in silence. The stranger was holding himself in such a position that Erbach knew instinctively there would be a struggle if he tried to advance. Never a physical coward—indeed, it was one of his oft repeated boasts that he never had and never would carry a gun, preferring rather his fists—he knew that two men against one was no fair match.

"I wouldn't if I were you," said Paget calmly.

Erbach scowled at the speaker and sat down again heavily.

"You hope to marry Miss Lloyd in September," said Thorne evenly.

"I shall marry her in September," corrected Erbach emphatically.

"You know, of course, that she loathes you," said the young American.

Erbach's face, as he fought down his inclination to attack the speaker, was not pretty to see. With Thorne in front of the door and Paget guarding the bell there was forced upon him the unwilling knowledge that he must listen to what these men chose to say. As to the ultimate outcome of it there could only be a triumph for him, but he brooked opposition ill.

"What do you want?" he demanded. "Money?"

Thorne waved his arm impatiently. "We are determined that you shall not marry Miss Lloyd," he cried.

Erbach laughed. "I see," he said with a sneer; "you two good young men will publish my infamy and rescue the girl. I am to be the villain and you two the heroes. You are rivals, I take it."

"Yes," said Thorne cheerfully; "you've got that part of it right."

Erbach leaned back and laughed. "My part is to listen with bowed head and give up, eh? And to live up to the moral stories, I should spend the remainder of my life in charities. Poor heroes," he sneered, "what a disappointment!"

"You can cut that foolery out," cried Thorne. "Do you suppose that we don't know you from A to Z? And knowing you, do you suppose we think there's any decency in you? It seems to me, Adolf, that you aren't showing your accustomed judgment. We are here to get some letters and a diary; they're in that safe there."

Erbach looked around hastily; it seemed as though he feared that it was open. No gesture could have betrayed the truth of Thorne's random shot more completely. "It's a lie!" he cried. "And if they were there you'd never get them."

Paget advanced toward him and leaned easily over the big table. "Look here," he said, "why not drop this fool attitude of yours? Aren't you clever enough to understand that you're cornered? We've been planning this interview for nearly two months. If money talks to you more than anything else I may tell you that it has cost us as nearly as possible a quarter of a million dollars to be in a position to board your craft and dictate terms to you. We're here. Just because we don't flourish revolvers or stilettos or make melodramatic threats doesn't prove we are not dangerous to you."

Erbach looked at the speaker sullenly. Coolness in emergencies and lack of excitement, qualities which were not

naturally his, had been cultivated with great assiduity. They were attributes which impressed him tremendously in others. He noted them in the two young men who had forced themselves so strangely into his presence. There was no trace of nervousness in either of them. They reminded him of the easy bearing of a stage burglar he had seen in a dramatized novel. There were no furtive glances to doors or hurried movements. To insure such carelessness they must have laid their plans as cleverly as he did when he set out to ruin business rivals. For an instant he felt he was beaten; but he was by nature aggressive and he stared back into Paget's face with renewed hostility.

"We are just as determined," said the Englishmen, "as though we were picturesque bandits from the Sicilian hills, or Western desperadoes. I wouldn't lose sight of that if I were you."

To one who knew him there might have been recognized a fleeting look of triumph on the financier's face. He seemed to be pondering the matter deeply when without warning he over-set his chair in a bound for the bell, from which Paget had moved. He placed his finger upon the knob.

"For determined and dangerous men who spend money so recklessly," he sneered, "you are pretty amateurish. This is what beats you."

As he pressed the button the tinkle of the bell was heard at the end of the corridor. With his back to the wall Erbach put himself in the posture of defense. "Most of my men are ashore," he cried, "but there are enough on board to give you two heroes a good time that you'll remember."

He was puzzled and vaguely uneasy that his action did not seem to concern his auditors. Paget lighted a cigarette and Thorne even moved from the door and sank wearily into a seat. He listened eagerly and his face brightened when the footsteps of deliverance were heard. As they approached the door he shouted: "Don't open! There are thieves here! Get the boys together quick!"

Despite his warning a tall, middle-aged sailor entered and looked inquiringly at Thorne, who was nearest to him.

"What about the two men in the engine room?" Thorne demanded.

"Drunk," said Trevick concisely.

"Where is the wireless operator?"

"Asleep in his berth," said the man.

"The other two?" cried Thorne.

"They was troublesome," said Trevick. "We had to tie 'em up."

"Wait outside," said Thorne.

When he had gone he turned to Erbach. "When you are in the Street," he said, "you haven't the reputation for underestimating your opponents."

"I don't know how you did it," cried Erbach, his eyes blazing with anger, "but by God, you shall rot in a Sicilian jail for this if I have any influence! My men will be back soon and nothing can save you."

"Guess again," said Thorne pleasantly. "If you had second sight you'd see your precious crew sleeping off some doped liquor in a barn at a little village called Molara. The rest of your men have leave all night and won't be back yet awhile. If they do come what good will it do you? The men berth forward and not here."

"You're a damned fool!" cried Erbach angrily. "You can't frighten me into giving up what you want. See here," he shouted, "I've been in strikes and riots and danger from California to Chicago, and I've been threatened by half the toughs in the country. Have I ever given up to them? Do I look like a man who is going to give up? What you want is in that safe in the top left hand drawer of the right compartment. How can you get it? Only through my telling you the combination. You may kill me if you like, but you'll never get it."

Thorne spoke to Paget without answering him. "Wasn't my little biographical sketch a gem?" he demanded. "Isn't this the man I told you to a fraction? Pig-headed, full of physical strength and courage, revengeful, boastful and not without hope, even in desperate emergencies." He examined Erbach with the care one might

bestow upon an uncommon species of wild animal.

The millionaire controlled himself with an effort. "I repeat," he said, "that you will never force me to give them up."

He glared with particular animosity at Paget; for he was of those who consider that hatred to all Britons is the beginning of patriotism.

"Underrating us again," cried Thorne. "I thought you were wiser by this time."

Erbach settled himself into his chair more comfortably.

"Well," he said at length, "you two young men may have drugged my crew and tied up a steward or two, but what then? Where do you come in on this deal?" He felt more assured from their manner that they were to offer him no physical violence and his spirits rose. He had not enjoyed the ordeal, but he would triumph. He had examined their faces shrewdly. These were not of the stuff desperadoes were made. He had a large acquaintance with criminals. When in Chicago he thought to raise himself to eminence by the devious ways of ward politics and had not cast his eyes to financial heights. Thorne, he reflected, was some college bred boy in love with Nina Lloyd, who had had the audacity to think he could beat Adolf Erbach. As for Paget, he was merely a fool Englishman who probably had a taste for novel reading. He strained his ears for the sound of returning rowers; and even when he heard nothing refused to lose heart. He saw Paget go to the cabin door and whistle for the big sailor, without alarm. What was muttered into the sailor's ear hardly interested him.

"Well," he said with a touch of satire, "you are wasting some of your valuable time, gentlemen. I am busy."

"I suppose," said Thorne quietly, "that you mean what you say as to not parting with that packet in the safe?"

"I do," said Erbach. "It's a present to my bride."

"I hardly expected you would," said Thorne easily; "so of course we made preparations for contingencies.

Now, Erbach, your press agents have flooded the American papers with stories of your attempt to form a sulphur trust. Pictures of your excursions to the hills are in the Sunday papers or will be in a couple of weeks. The little people don't believe any different, but the big fellows know there is nothing in sulphur for a man with your ambitions. I know it, too."

"Is that so?" cried the millionaire with mock admiration. "Seems I've been entertaining angels unaware. You know it, too!"

"Yes," said Thorne slowly, "and I know what you're here for. I've known for three years what you think about Harriman and Hill."

Erbach affected not to show how this shot told.

"Pinkerton man?" he inquired with an intention to offend.

"No," said Thorne. "What I know about you I learned when I was a member of the New York Stock Exchange."

"You?" cried Erbach, looking at him with vivid interest.

"I was the junior member of Buckley, Buckley & Thorne. My particular chum at Harvard was Perriton Elwell, whose father used to be a close associate of yours before you ruined him. I learned a great deal about you and your ways of doing business from my friend Perry."

"This doesn't interest me," responded Erbach coldly.

"It does interest me, though," said Thorne. "It interests me so much that I have spent all my pocket money of late keeping tabs on your doings. I know, for example, why you are reading that map so lovingly. I know the names of the agents who are buying for you in blocks big enough to be useful and yet not big enough to alarm anyone. I know your ambition to be a sort of Napoleon of railroads. You want to be able to dictate to the big fellows. I know the winning ways adopted by you to the English shareholders you met at the Cannon Street Hotel last week, when you went proxy collecting. I always liked ambition."

"You did, did you?" cried Erbach,

banging the table violently. "Well, I always disliked puppies of your kind. I haven't any use for them."

Thorne took no notice of the interruption. "I know that you either get control of the Eastern Pacific Railroad this coming week or not at all. I know that your New York manager gets to Brindisi tomorrow at noon and then in this very cabin you and he plan the big move. For once you've caught the big H's napping and they'll experience the joy of having to be polite to each other for at least a whole day before you can be overtaken and crumpled up."

Thorne was enjoying himself immensely. He felt better in health and spirits and for a young man possessed an immense knowledge of the intricate situation which had grown up lately in Eastern Pacific affairs. Less than three months absent from the financial center of the world, he had managed to keep himself in touch with things remarkably well. Paget sat dumb in mute admiration. With all the many talks they had had together he could not grasp the points which seemed so plain to the business mind of the American. He had a blind faith in Thorne's financial genius, and that Erbach had accepted his statements without a shadow of dissent proved to him that they were correct. It was obvious that Erbach was unwillingly conceding his opponent a deeper respect. If Thorne spoke truly his firm stood very high in New York. Buckley, Sr., was a member of the advisory committee of the Exchange and a safe, conservative broker of the better sort. But this made no difference to his assumption that they had played their cards and lost. At all events, they would be in no position to harm him or interfere with his plans. They had ventured into a lion's den armed with popguns. Thus did Adolf Erbach, content to trust no man wholly, but gifted with a sublime faith in himself, regard them.

He had broken a number of men in his career. Not only those men who had harmed him, but men who had tried and failed. It was always wise,

he contended, to break the latter class lest they would succeed in a fresh attempt. And these two young men had earned more hatred through their interference in his private affairs than any others since the days in Chicago, which he tried never to think about. A smile of contempt spread itself over his hard face. He admired bluff only when it succeeded.

"Is that all?" he demanded.

"We have a proposition to make," said Thorne. "If you give us the letters and the diary you can go to financial perdition or glory in your own fashion. We'll take no hand in the game."

"That proposition is turned down right off the reel," cried the financier. "What next?"

"Your ruin," returned Thorne, "more sudden than Morse's, and more complete than the insurance fellows'."

"I have never," replied Erbach with intense conviction, "met any two men so hopelessly crazy as you are. I'm a revengeful man. I never let up; it's not my way, but you two aren't worth fighting. No, sir."

"Tell me this," cried Thorne, leaning forward earnestly. "Am I wrong in stating that this big game you are playing means your financial salvation?"

Erbach pondered for a moment. "What do you mean?" he demanded.

"I mean that if you fail here you'll have to start over again just as you did when you tried, single-handed, to break up the Produce Exchange crowd in Chicago ten years or so ago."

"I'm taking the risk," said Erbach, unable to resist an inclination to brag. "But it's as good as finished already, with me on the top."

"That's your little miscalculation," said the other. "You mean that when Anderson gets to Brindisi and you meet him, then the matter will be decided. You are waiting for his reports."

Erbach experienced a return of the suspicious feeling which had been his earlier in the interview. He was afraid he had talked too much. It was a rare weakness with him. The secretary to

whom he paid ten thousand dollars a year, who had unfortunately gone to a masquerade ball in a Palermo hotel, received his salary principally for his gift of fluent speech from which no particular meaning could be extracted.

"What if I am?" he asked.

"Simply this," said Thorne, "that when he comes you will not be here. You will be our guest on a turbine yacht five knots an hour faster than your boat. We shall do some delightful cruising among the Ægean Islands. Meanwhile you will have your opportunity to begin life over again. We shall not win the letters, but you certainly won't get control of the Eastern Pacific."

"What do you think of our peculiar brand of lunacy?" asked Paget, pleasantly breaking into the conversation. "We're rather proud of it."

Erbach turned on him savagely and for a moment looked as though he would hurl himself at the speaker. But things were too serious for that. The strange coolness and self-possession of these men was explained. They had drawn him out, laughing the while in their sleeves, and now solemnly proposed to abduct him. If they gained their ends absolute ruin was in store. He alone of the men associated with him in the venture had the master mind to grapple with the myriad details of the great deal. From his unknown retreat he had been moving his pieces like a chess player and had kept in touch with every one of his adversaries' moves. A day's absence would be a calamity; a week would mean such a financial collapse as is seldom seen. This on the one side and his passion for the beautiful daughter of Colonel Lloyd on the other.

He fought for time. "Don't you know what a serious crime you contemplate?" he said. "And I don't believe you could carry it out, either."

"Don't be fool enough to believe that," said Thorne. "Have we made any false moves so far? Here you are absolutely alone. We have four men aboard ready to truss you up like a chicken and row you to our yacht.

Steam is up and before anyone is the wiser off we go. We're provisioned for a long cruise, and for a month at least we can't be caught."

"You will be in the end," cried Erbach.

Thorne shrugged his shoulders carelessly. "We have calculated that, too," he said. "It's all in the game."

"God!" cried Erbach in a gust of passion. "You shall pay for this!"

"That's in the game, too," said Paget imperturbably. He walked quietly to the door and gave a slight whistle. Footsteps were heard in the passage. "Now," he said to the millionaire, "you've heard the offer. You've heard, too, the heavy feet of our men. Sixty seconds is enough for you to decide. What is it?"

He had stepped between Thorne and Erbach in case the rage of the financier should lead him to make an attack on his friend, who was physically in no condition for such violence. Paget held himself warily. He had a boxer's respect for those great arms and shoulders.

Erbach felt himself weakening. There was a deadly certainty of success in the faces of his opponents. He was alone on the ship. There was no help for it.

"Will you swear not to make any mention"—he pointed to the great map of the Eastern Pacific route—"of this? That's part of the bargain, eh?"

"We want only the letters and the diary," said Thorne impatiently. "You fight the rest out without our interference."

Erbach looked at them with a trace of anxiety. He decided that he could believe them. Paget followed him to the safe. He had vague ideas that such receptacles were often the size of rooms, and that Erbach, like the villain of a melodrama, might secrete himself therein and hiss curses through the keyhole. But it was a safe of the usual type, and in the drawer indicated the precious package lay. He passed it over to Thorne, who examined the twenty letters and their signatures closely. "It's all right," he exclaimed,

putting them and the leather-bound book in an inner pocket.

At a signal from Paget, Trevick strode into the cabin. Erbach glanced at him indignantly. "Here, what's this?" he cried.

"A mark of respect for your resourceful nature," Paget explained. "If we left you free to range the decks you'd probably scuttle our little boat or blow our brains out."

Dexterously the big sailor pinioned the millionaire and trussed him fast to his chair. Erbach's forehead grew red and the veins stood out purple at the indignity of it all, but he kept silence.

"It won't be for long," said Paget. "We shall rouse the wireless operator from his slumbers and say you need him." He thought he detected a gleam of hope in the bound man's eye. Unkindly he set himself to dislodge it. "I'm afraid you won't be able to utilize his professional services just yet, because our skipper is rather keen on wireless himself and had the misfortune in examining yours to do some trifling damage. I don't understand these things myself, but he tells me that it requires some hours of work on it before you can send or receive messages."

Erbach stared straight before him, uttering never a word.

Ten minutes later a sleepy disciple of Marconi released him from his position and bound himself by a solemn oath to say nothing of the unexplained occurrence. About this time the *Chaser* moved slowly out into the Tyrrhenian Sea.

In deference to his father's wish, Paget had kept him informed by cable of his several changes of address. Once or twice he had received short letters from him breathing, it seemed to the son, a spirit of affection which he had not previously known. He had arranged that before he left Palermo a messenger should go to the Poste Restante and see what mail there might be. The man brought back a cablegram from Dr. Bagot. "Your father is in a very critical condition; come at once."

He called for Captain Penfold. "I must get to Naples," he said, "as soon

as possible. Push her as fast as she can go."

He found Thorne lying in his deck house very white, so white that he seemed a different being from the strong, resolute man who had helped to checkmate Erbach an hour before. Paget could hardly check a cry of dismay. Thorne looked up and smiled reassuringly.

"A little hemorrhage," he said. "I exerted myself too much. What's your trouble, old man?"

Paget flung himself into one of the low basket chairs and handed the wire to his friend.

"Bad luck," said Thorne. "Where have you to go?"

"The extreme western part of England," he was told. "I shall leave the boat at Naples and go home overland. By sea would take me too long. I don't know how long I may be detained at home—perhaps for some weeks. You had better send off those letters directly we get there. I shall have to drive like fury to the station."

"They shall go," cried Thorne, "just as soon as I can take them." His face brightened as he thought of it. "Didn't it go off well! I feel that I shall never have another sad hour. To beard Erbach in his own cabin and make him give up without a struggle!" He gave a faint chuckle of enjoyment. "Of course," he added in graver tone, "Erbach isn't going to accept this as an act of Providence. Look out for him!"

"I shan't lose sleep over him," smiled Paget. "Where shall we meet again?" he asked. "And what is to become of the *Chaser*, now that she has accomplished the end we bought her for?"

"Why not keep her?" said Thorne. "I'll take her if you want to sell your interest. I'm a whole lot better, and I'm going to have some fun yet." He spoke with the assurance which is usually to be found in tubercular patients. Paget, who could not share his sanguine outlook, had not the heart to express doubt.

"All right," he agreed. "Now I wouldn't advise you to stay in Naples

an hour longer than you need. It's beastly hot and unsanitary in the summer. Why not cruise about in your own sweet way and let me know what's happening?" He paused for a moment. "My address is St. Vian, Cornwall, England. I'm afraid John Paget won't find me."

Thorne looked up quickly. "Why not?" he demanded. "Aren't you John Paget?"

In a few words Paget explained how it was he became Paget. He did this with a perfect confidence in his friend's discretion. Thorne was keenly interested.

"All right, my Lord," he laughed, "it shall be as Your Lordship commands. To think I have been living with a despised sprig of aristocracy without suspecting the contaminating influence! When I used to write for the *Lampoon* at Harvard I went for you hot and strong. Where's your eyeglass and your drawl, sonny, and where is the drooping mustache all cavalrymen wear?"

"They don't," corrected Paget. "Most of us in the mounted branch are clean shaven like you fellows. Infantrymen affect mustaches, though."

They sat talking for an hour or more, the familiar affectionate talk of two men who like one another and are knit by association into a friendship which has not to reassure itself by protestation. Always popular among his fellows, Paget had never known a man so intimately as Jarvis Thorne. Directly he was able to leave his father, whom he did not believe to be seriously ill, he determined to see that Thorne had the best medical advice the world afforded. His was a friendship, the Englishman felt, he could not afford to lose.

"Old man," he said presently, "your temperature is going up and you ought to be very careful."

"I shall live to dance at your wedding," cried the other. "But at present I believe I shall sleep." He held out his hand. "Farewell, my noble friend."

Threading its way through the innumerable craft in the congested har-

bor of Naples the *Chaser's* fast little launch landed Paget near the station. He was lucky enough to get the mail train connecting with the P. L. M., and had started for home before Thorne awakened from a troubled night. He had been sleeping when his friend looked through the screened window, and betrayed his exhaustion so obviously that Paget had gone without a farewell.

Dr. Bagot met him at the end of his long drive to St. Vian. "He is very ill," said the physician; "much worse than you expect."

Mountcastle's heart sank. "Is it his heart?" he demanded.

Dr. Bagot nodded acquiescence. "You must come at once," he said.

The Earl, looking very much the same as usual, smiled faintly when Mountcastle came into the room. "It was Bagot's fault," he said. "He sent for you unauthorized."

"It was against my will that he went," returned the doctor.

"Why didn't you tell me?" demanded Mountcastle. It seemed suddenly that he had betrayed an appalling selfishness in remaining so carelessly ignorant of his father's condition. Chronic gout, he had always heard, affected the heart. For years the Earl had suffered periodical attacks, but he had grown so used to them that he could not imagine they were likely to bring about his death.

"I'll ring if I want you, Bagot," said the Earl. When the physician had closed the door his father turned to him with a smile. "Well?" he demanded. "Success or failure?"

"Success," said his son. "It went off splendidly." In the grief he was experiencing he could think of nothing but his desertion of a man who had the first claim upon him, a father who had always been indulgent and kind. "Why didn't you warn me?" he demanded.

"Because I wanted you to go," said the other. "My dear lad, you couldn't have helped me. If you spoke truly this girl needed you much more than I. And what did it matter? Here

am I alive and happy, and this wonderful girl won't have to marry the man she loathes. It seems to me it has worked out in accordance with the best precepts of fiction and the drama. Tell me about it."

He listened eagerly. "I wish I could have seen her," he said at length.

"Why won't you?" cried his son.

He shook his head. "My boy," he said, "Bagot is right. I don't think it will be very long now." He gave a smile that had something of bitterness in it. "I am not dreading it very much. I have ridden straighter than most people think."

For a week there seemed little change in the Earl's health. The Princess Castelazzi and Cyril Trevenose were summoned to the castle, and it seemed to all but Bagot that they would be able to leave assured of partial convalescence, at least, when one night they were called to the sick room. The old man, with the indomitable spirit of a long line of men who, whatever of the virtues they may have lacked, possessed at least a high courage, was least perturbed of the group. When the summer morning crept into the apartment, putting to shame the artificial light, John Paget Courtenay Trevenose found himself the eighteenth Earl of St. Vian.

XV

WHEN Thorne awoke after Paget had left the vessel he sent for Captain Penfold and demanded to know how long the *Chaser* had been at anchor. He was reassured to learn that she had steamed very fast from Palermo and had been at anchor not an hour. There was always a dread of Erbach's attempt to get the letters back. To guard against any accident of this sort Penfold and the Trevicks accompanied him to the central post office, where in a registered package the things were mailed to Nina Lloyd at the address near Bar Harbor which she had given him as her summer home until September, when she would return to New

York for the marriage. It had been his intention to send a letter to Paget at the same time he mailed the package to Maine, but he was overcome by the great heat of the city. He would write on board and send it ashore.

Jarvis Thorne had always been a fighter. When his superb physical condition had allowed him to be the best Number Seven who ever welded the two sides of a crew into harmony on American waterways, he was one of the Harvard men who did not merit the taunt that he was an alumnus of a great institution who had put aside scholarship for athletics. He had a keen, discriminating mind and an indomitable faith in himself. Directly he was rowed aboard the *Chaser* he felt that he was in for a very bad attack. Never had he experienced such a profound lassitude. Accustomed to following the instructions of a noted Philadelphia physician, he thought he would be able to attend to himself without summoning medical help. Thus it was that when still in sight of Vesuvius he was prostrated from severe hemorrhages. He had the will to live in a very marked degree. That depression which obsessed him on meeting Paget was due more to the bitter memories evoked by the sight of the girl who could not love him, and the fate in store for her, than to his own physical condition. Now that she was freed by the efforts of two men who loved her, and he had formed a deep attachment for his friend Paget, he cast all gloomy thoughts from him. The letter that he was to have dispatched to England was forgotten. He told himself that directly he was better he would write a faithful account of his doings.

When Captain Penfold found him in a high fever and raving deliriously he was at a loss what to do. Naples, unhealthy, unsanitary despite her marvelous beauty, lay behind him many miles, and he was heading for the more temperate North. One of the men had some training as a sick bay steward of the Royal Navy. He was installed as an attendant while the vessel's course

was laid for Nice. Penfold knew that in this famous health resort there were English and American physicians and hospitals where his employer would receive the best attention. They had taken on enough coal at Naples to enable them to make a very fast run. The engineer, with a pride that a convert to turbines takes in his machinery, aided his skipper, and the green hills that lie along the French Riviera came into sight in a marvelously short time.

Thorne was removed to a private sanitarium recommended by his consul and lay for nearly a month fighting for life. He was emaciated beyond belief when Penfold at his request was shown onto the balcony where his bed was. He had recognized the inevitable; but he met his fate with the cheery *insouciance* which had ever marked him. He could not understand why it was that he had become reconciled at last. Someone had lent him a volume of Browning, and he had found his own spirit in those courageous lines in *Prospice*: "I was ever a fighter, so one fight more, the best and the last."

Penfold sat close to him so that he might not have to raise his voice. The sailor was immeasurably shocked. There was no chance to offer the customary hopes for recovery.

"Do you know Cornwall well?" said Thorne.

"I was born in Falmouth, sir," returned the other. "I married a girl from Penzance, and my home, when ashore, is Flushing, just across from Falmouth."

"Do you know of a place named St. Vian? I don't think it's a very big place."

"It's a little fishing village on the north coast, not far from Tintagel," said the captain.

"I want you to take the *Chaser* there."

"There's no safe anchorage for a vessel our size along there," protested the captain. "It's a dangerous coast any time of the day:

"From Padstow Point to Lundy light
A watery grave by day or night—

that's an old saying in those parts, sir. There is a sort of private harbor built by the Earl of St. Vian for his own yacht; he lets fishing boats or, in fact, anything else make use of it in dirty weather, but it's no anchorage for any other man's yacht."

"I don't think he'll object," returned Thorne. "Quite between ourselves, skipper, Mr. John Paget was a name assumed for a purpose. You aided us to carry that purpose out. He should be called Viscount Mountcastle. His father is the Earl of St. Vian."

Whatever astonishment the Cornishman may have felt he kept, with the self-possession of his people, to himself.

"Then he's the Earl now," he said after a momentary pause. "I saw by the *Western Morning News* that his father died about three weeks ago. The old Earl," he added in explanation, "was for many years an invalid."

Thorne sighed. So his death would come at a moment when his friend was in bitter trouble! There was a silence for some minutes. Penfold was angry to think he had mentioned the Earl's decease. He felt it was unpardonably clumsy.

Presently he saw the thin white hand of Thorne reach out for something by his bedside. He handed a little package to him.

"It's my watch," he said. "I shan't need it. It's timed some fast trials, Penfold, has that old split second watch." He handed an unaddressed envelope to the sailor. "There's some money to be divided among the men. They're good lads and I don't want them to think I have forgotten them."

"They haven't forgotten," cried the sailor. "I've never sailed under better owners and never shall. We're all upset over this. There isn't a man there," he concluded, lapsing into his native idiom, "but isn't feeling as whist as a winnard."

"It's all in the day's run, I suppose," said Thorne. "When you see Lord St. Vian I want you to give him some messages. I hoped to write them, but the doctors won't let me. Tell him that I mailed the package to America.

And tell him that my share of the *Chaser* goes to him. You've got that?"

"I shall remember," said Penfold.

Thorne held out a white hand and smiled with his old cheerfulness.

"Good-bye skipper, good-bye. You'll wait in harbor till they send you word. You understand?"

Penfold bowed and passed out, not trusting himself to say anything. He left, rebelling, in human fashion, against the death of a young man to whom life offered so much. In the careless disregard of human health laws—a carelessness which takes its dreadful toll of all classes—he saw only the hard hand of a divine Providence inexorably bent upon human destruction.

XVI

THE enormous amount of business necessary to settle such a vast estate as that of the Trevenoses busied the new Earl so much that he had little time left for anything else.

As the days and weeks went by and presently drew themselves into months Lord St. Vian became very much troubled by lack of news from Thorne. A hundred fears overwhelmed him at the inexplicable silence. Had illness or Erbach got the better of the resolute young American? And he was troubled, too, lest the girl for whom they had risked so much should not have benefited thereby. In none of the columns of the society papers he pored over was any mention to be seen of Erbach or the Lloyds. In no yachting news was there any mention of the *Chaser*. He hunted through back numbers of shipping periodicals with no result. He had so strong a faith in his friend that the employment of detectives seemed almost like an act of treachery. Directly the imperative affairs were settled he determined to set out on a search. He had last seen the boat at Naples. From Naples, then, he would prosecute his inquiries.

Before breakfast of the day he was leaving he rode along the cliffs by St. Vian's Cross. Far to the south passed

the great vessels on their thousand-league journey to America. To the northwest Lundy Island loomed shadowy and vague out of the blue waters. He rode nearer the cliff's edge so that he might take a last look at the little granite-built harbor which had been so dear to his father, which had saved hundreds of lives when the brave little fishing boats, flying before the winter storms, had found there a shelter erected by private hands to shame a lax government.

Quietly lying at her moorings was the *Chaser*. And her flag was at half-mast. He rode back to the castle instantly. A footman told him that Captain Penfold was awaiting him.

He pressed the sailor's hand cordially. Toward the men who had helped him in his quest he felt ever an affection which showed itself in a hundred actions.

He half feared to ask as to the flag. It might be out of respect to his late father, but he felt that it was for the more recent death of his best friend. Penfold told him very simply what had happened since he left the vessel in Naples. In the midst of his natural sorrow there came the happiness in knowing that Nina must have received the letters. This gave him time to rest quietly and ponder as to his future actions. The most important thing would be to find the girl again. Of her address he had little knowledge. Inquiry at the Bloomsbury boarding house elicited nothing. The same fortune attended his efforts to find Miss Scott's from her Bruges *pension*. She had gone and left no address. Not two days after his visit to Mrs. Dean's establishment a letter was received for him there bearing the postmark of Bar Harbor, Maine. Thinking he might call again, Mrs. Dean placed it with other letters, where it remained neglected. It was a pæan of praise from Nina that the barriers of which she had hinted were now removed. She wrote it in the fullness of her love, never doubting that it would bring him back to her on wings.

He, in his turn, addressed a letter to

her in care of the post office at New York. It was returned in the regulation way. She had not lived in New Orleans for some years, he knew, so he did not write there.

An elderly relative high in the diplomatic service of his country rallied him upon his changed manner. It was when he had taken his seat for the first time in the House of Lords.

"Do something, my dear fellow," cried his uncle. "Mix with people more."

"I hate people," said his nephew savagely.

"I'm sorry," said the other. "The Prime Minister asked me last night whether I thought you would go as military attaché to Washington."

"Is there the opportunity?" asked the young man in a changed voice.

"It's yours for the asking," said the diplomat. "You are young, can stand losses at bridge and the little expenses of the younger set there, and it would be a good training." General the Honorable Reginald Trevenose had that pride of family which felt there was nothing the head of it would not adorn. "You'll like Washington," he said. "I was there in Pauncefote's time, and it's much livelier now. The only pity is that Washington isn't a suburb of New York. Are you keen on it?"

"I never felt keener," cried the younger man brightly. "My dear uncle, this is awfully decent of you. You really think I can get it?"

The Prime Minister, who knew the Earl's reputation as a soldier and liked him personally, gazetted the appointment and by the first week in November he reached Washington.

Those of his companions at the Embassy who were acquainted with American society of the class which has the entrée to official circles in Washington remembered Miss Lloyd. "I know," said one of the secretaries. "She was that awfully pretty girl who was going to marry Erbach. She chucked the brute when he smashed up."

"Did he smash?" cried Lord St. Vian eagerly.

"Came an awful cropper," returned

the other. "Wanted to corner something or other very big. Railways or something immense. They cornered him, instead. I believe he's cornering lumber in Alaska. Pretty rough to lose fortune and wife at one swoop!"

It was the first definitely reassuring news he had had. His spirits rose instantly. "Where is she?" he demanded.

"Up the Nile or somewhere in Egypt, I think," the secretary returned. "This rotter Erbach would have broken Lloyd to pieces if he hadn't been smashed up himself. It was in all the papers," he concluded vaguely; "quite a big thing."

The secretary was right in a way. Erbach, with what was left of his fortune, had gone to Alaska. And Miss Lloyd and her father had gone to Egypt. It was partly a business trip, since the old Southern planter had always desired to see the African rival to American cotton. They had been in Washington a week when Lord St. Vian reached it.

His first glimpse of official Washington *in excelsis* took place at one of the great receptions at the White House. The presence of the Corps Diplomatique, of the attachés and other officers in uniform, makes these receptions as brilliant as those at a European capital. A love for color and pageantry was a marked feature of Nina Lloyd. With a companion she watched the various members passing the President, who stood at the top of the room. The Lloyds had taken a house at the Capital for the season, and were *persona grata* in the circles which are the most difficult to enter. She had not altered much in six months. Her face had grown a little harder, perhaps, and there was a look of boredom which she had not always possessed, but she was the same brilliantly beautiful woman who attracted instant admiration. She was standing with a witty young American, who promised to make a career for himself. He knew everyone and pointed out what notables the girl did not recognize.

"You see the man talking to the President?" he said.

Nina glanced at an officer in the blue and gold of the British Hussars, who was chatting with the nation's Executive.

"I saw the back of him just now," she returned, "and was overpowered by the gold braid and glint of medals. I wish our men had prettier uniforms. It would make our official functions so much more brilliant. I have always thought that the European women must have designed those uniforms—they're so becoming. Who is the gorgeous individual, Mr. Landon?"

"The new military attaché at the British Embassy," she was told. "He's the Earl of St. Vian, and gifted with an enormous fortune, which will probably upset some of our humorists. For the rest, he has many estates and titles and is a bachelor."

"St. Vian," she repeated slowly. "St. Vian—I think I remember reading about their castle in the West of England. It is a wonderful medieval sort of place, full of art treasures they won't sell. I met one of them once. The family name is Trevenose, you know. Father Cyril Trevenose is the young Ritualist who is setting London by the ears on account of the sins of its society. I met him once quite informally." She smiled at the recollection. "He is not so violent as he is painted." She remembered her astonishment at the nursery full of toys into which she had stumbled. "He does a lot for crippled children."

Then her thoughts went back to that day at Sluys in the happiest week of her life, when she walked over the dunes with the John Paget she loved.

"Why do you look so sad?" demanded her companion.

"A woman always feels sad at an official reception," she retorted, forcing a smile. "It's the one place where her gowns are eclipsed. How can I look as gorgeous as that Hussar, for instance, with medals and stars and orders and yards of lace and gold braid?"

"They say he's a crackerjack at polo," said Landon with enthusiasm. "His regiment won the British Army polo cup three years in succession with

his playing. He's got a corking lot of ponies in training, I hear. We want him at Chevy Chase. Those Meadow Brook men think there's no combination can beat them."

She listened with scant interest. All her thoughts were of distant Bruges and the man from whom each day she looked to have some sign, some token that he had not forgotten. If only he had received her letter she knew he would come. If not, what hope had she that he could ever learn she was free? She was too acute an observer not to have seen that destiny wrecks happiness most usually by the little accidents of life. A lost train, a strayed letter, a misinterpreted glance—these things Fate uses more often than tragic calamities. Landon talked on enthusiastically of his favorite game, but she was not listening.

Suddenly he saw her start and then turn very pale. Almost involuntarily, it seemed to her companion, she took a step forward and stared very fixedly at some one of the many walking in their direction from the other side of the room where the President was receiving.

He could see that it was at Lord St. Vian she was gazing, as he advanced toward her talking to a well known Washington hostess. He was not the only one who observed the girl. A singular emotion possessed Landon. Instinctively he felt that the mystery of the girl's alteration of manner, of her different attitude to her world, was to be explained. Something drew the Earl's eyes to hers, some strange subtle sympathy, for Landon saw him stop suddenly and stare into the girl's face.

St. Vian's stern face lost its look of repression, and there came into it a look of contentment, almost of rest. Quickly he glanced at Nina. Her lips were parted in a smile of radiant happiness.

With a bare gesture of apology Lord St. Vian left his companion and came over to Nina and took her arm in his. Then, without any word spoken between them, they were lost in the vaster crowd which had not seen.

THE ABDICATION OF H. R. H. PATRICIA

By ROLAND FRANKLYN ANDREWS

SOMETIMES she snuggled delightedly in the soft, white fur of her coat, pressing her trembling fingers to her palms in a quiver of anticipation. Sometimes, when the wheels slurred through the mud under the glaring lights, she leaned over the hansom apron and smiled back at the dull sidewalk people who stared so awkwardly. Once she reached for the trap on the impulse to talk to the driver, who had spoken so politely and who was such a nice man, despite his red face, and who would surely be glad to share her pleasure, but she caught the daring hand, reproved it smartly, imprisoned it in her muff and contented herself with a little wriggle of ecstasy. She waved her bouquet of violets at a street urchin, who dodged from under the very hoofs, and she told herself quite sternly that while, of course, she must sing, she must sing very softly, else one of these very big and very brave policemen who were so handsome in their splendid uniforms would have to speak to her. What a long way it was to Park Row, and how long she would have to wait for the papers! But what a beautiful drive it was, and what a fine hansom she had chosen and what a glorious city was hers to look upon! And finally, how happy she was, and how happy everybody else was, and what a quantity of happiness there was to be had in the world if only you busied yourself enough to find it!

"Please, please, hurry up, big newspapers, and please drive swiftly, Mr.

Cabby," she supplicated very softly, "and please, people, don't think I'm queer because I'm riding all alone in the big city in a cab that I paid for with my own money. But please hurry up, because it's very important, and it's just as mean to keep me waiting as it would be to postpone Christmas. There, I mustn't talk to myself because I'm grown up. How beautifully that horse's coat does shine. I wish I had some sugar for him. I—"

She pinched her lips ferociously with her fingers, straightened with prim dignity, leaned forward again and gazed out into the street, where the mud and rain glistened like crystal and the ugly buildings in the foreground gave way to enchanted palaces, sparkling with stars as they towered majestically in the darkness only a little way beyond. A square, luminous and musical with its white flame of light and roar of traffic, floated gently around the hansom, then into the background as the magnificent horse drew her gently into a peristyle, whereof the roof was sky and the columns jasper or some other stone that sounded pleasant enough to eat when you pronounced it, adorned with magic legends foretelling the joyousness of the future. The columns were, of course, the grimy structures of the wholesale district, and the legends read, "Morgenstein & Blum," or "The Meyer-Kohn Co." But if one had so little mind as to be literal, alone in a hansom on such a night . . .

She marveled again at the great goodness of things as they are. She

luxuriated in the white fur coat and she sniffed at the violets with delight. The things that she had were so pleasant and the things which were to come were so much more worth the having. Only it was so trying to wait for them. Very carefully she made herself a child again, marching her mind back to the days when she consoled herself for the awful wrongs of discipline with the thoughts of the unrestraint which holidays would bring. All the joys of holiday were hurrying toward her now, only these would be so much sweeter because she had won them for herself. She, a very small, very timid little girl—yes, she was a little girl and she always would be, no matter what old people thought about it—had won them for herself in a great cruel city, where many strong, brave men had broken. If only she had someone to share her happiness now, some really understanding, truly sympathetic friend, who would know enough to dismiss all thoughts of self and simply help her enjoy—enjoy—enjoy—“Oh, Dickon! Dickon! Stop, Mr. Cabby, stop quick!”

The man on the curb set down his suit case with a look of startled surprise. He was tall and broad-shouldered and he carried himself well, but the lines of his face were deeper than they should have been on the score of age, if you estimated his years by his tired young eyes and his mobile lips. His breath came shortly, as though the exertions of carrying the suit case had been heavy, and there was concern in his attitude.

“Maurise,” he exclaimed, “Maurise, what in the world—”

“Jump in, Dickon—jump in quick or I’ll jump right at you! Quick, Dickon! Oh, you dear! I’m so glad you’ve come. Go on, Mr. Cabby—No, Dickon, I don’t care where you’re going. We’re going a-riding. Oh, Dickon, Dickon, wasn’t it perfectly beautiful!”

“Maurise—” began the man.

“Yes, I have on my rubbers and I’m perfectly warm, and I ought not to be home in bed, and I’m perfectly safe here alone, or I was until you came—I mean, I’m safer now—and I’m not be-

ing foolish, and, oh, Dickon, it was a success, wasn’t it? Did you like me? Did you help them applaud? Why didn’t you come back to see me? Where were you, Dickon? Oh, wasn’t it grand!”

“Maurise, what are you doing here?”

“Why, Dickon, you sober-sided old dear, I’m after the papers.”

“The papers!”

“Yes, of course, the papers. Did you think I could wait until morning to read what the critics say? Don’t you know me better than that, Dickon? They were trying to have a supper party for me, and a lot of people wanted to talk to me seriously—mostly it was Mr. Margate and the author who wanted to do that—but I ran away in the middle of it and I found this nice hansom, because I wanted something that lasted longer than a taxi, and now I’m going to drive and drive and get the very first papers they print. I couldn’t wait. Oh, Dickon, weren’t you proud of me?”

“You were very wonderful,” said the man gravely. “To me you were the most wonderful girl in the world.”

“Oh, Dickon—honestly? Just for that I am going to kiss you.” Her fingers fluttered on his arm; her face was held close to his, her red lips parted. The incense of her was in his nostrils, her eyes bade him welcome. But he turned away.

“I can’t kiss you, Maurise.”

“Dickon!” There was hurt in her cry. “Oh, silly, prim old Dickon—just because we aren’t engaged! It was only going to be a butterfly stage kiss, anyway. Some time you’ll be sorry. See, Dickon, see the billboard! ‘Maurise Hallot in “Her Royal Highness Patricia.”’ That’s I, Dickon. I’m ‘Her Royal Highness Patricia.’ Make him drive slowly past all the billboards and you read them to me. Oh, it’s beautiful!”

“Does it mean so much to you, Maurise?”

“So much to me! Oh, Dickon! Don’t you know? Can’t you understand? It means—it means everything! It means that at last I’ve be-

gun to live and that life's worth living. I've won my goal. Think back a little, Dickon. You remember when I first came here, how poor I was and what things I had to do; how I worked and studied and sat for hours in those horrible offices to beg greasy, leering, fat men for just a chance; how I wore my thin, shabby jacket all those cold winters and lived in a little mite of a room with just that one window on the air-shaft for me to paste my handkerchiefs on after I'd laundered them at the washstand; how I ate things that came from under a glass case while I sat on a high stool; how I had to see you in that stuffy little parlor with the haircloth furniture and the grocery clerks; how there were girls I had to know and men I had to refuse to know; how heartless and cold and selfish and cruel everybody was—everybody but you, Dickon, dear; how I was pushed aside for this thing and that and laughed at and neglected and made to go without the food I needed and the clothes I wanted. And now, now, Dickon, I'm Her Royal Highness Patricia! I'm 'The Youngest American Star'! And I can buy an automobile!"

"Food," said the man slowly, "food and clothes and an automobile. We're all alike."

"Oh, don't be horrid, Dickon. I'd like it just as much buying them for you. It's the knowing that I *can* buy them. And it isn't materialistic, either. Don't you see, it's just being something that counts! It's just the growing from a little dun-colored atom, feeble and helpless and worthless to anybody, into something that's big and vital and of consequence to everybody. It's just not having to cramp and pinch and stand aside for everybody. It's just being able to give myself—or you, Dickon—or anybody—anything I want and to do the best work that's in me. It's just getting where I can be petted and flattered and liked because I'm worth it. That is life, Dickon. That is what 'Mr. Margate's youngest star' is, and I've made it all myself. Just think, if I should die right here in this cab now, the papers would print it on

the first page and there would be pictures of me, and all the people who have seen me would feel a real personal loss because I had gone away, and you would probably be arrested—yes, even you would be a person of consequence, Dickon, dear."

"Don't," cried the man.

"Oh, I won't, Dickon. I won't die and make you famous yet. I'm going to live and be very, very successful, and not go out till the wrinkles come. That won't be for a long time, will it, Dickon? It's so good to be alive!"

"No," said the man gently, "the real wrinkles won't ever come to you, Maurice, and you will live long and be happy ever after. There's a bonny long road for you to travel. But now you must drop me. I—I have an engagement uptown."

"You sha'n't go. You've got to buy the papers. They must be these damp, sticky papers with the ink so fresh it will spoil my gloves, and you must help me to read them so that we can decide together which little critics on the hearth were truly intelligent, and, finally, you must see that I get home safely, and tomorrow you must send me a perfectly enormous bunch of roses. Don't reach for the trap. You don't seem to understand that I'm Her Royal Highness Patricia, and that everybody must do as I say; that everybody must help me to be happy."

"That is precisely what I do understand. Maurice, I—"

"Oh, there's another billboard! 'John Margate presents Maurice Hal-lot.' Oh, Dickon, Dickon, don't mind if I do squeeze your hand. Isn't it just heavenly!"

"I am going to take the next car uptown."

"You are not. It isn't polite to leave princesses alone that way. And, besides, if you do Her Royal Highness Patricia will condemn you to death."

"Ugh—h—h!"

"What's the matter, Dickon?"

"Nothing. I beg your pardon. A catch in my breath, I think."

"You're not ill, Dickon?"

"Merely weak-minded. Otherwise I

shouldn't allow you to drag me about in this absurd fashion."

"I am Her Royal Highness Patricia. Oh-h, there's the first newspaper wagon! Catch it, Dickon! Catch it quickly and I won't punish you for being saucy. Quick, quick, quick—those boys are getting them! That's right, Dickon, buy them all—lots of them—everything! Buy one of that littlest boy. There—oh, what a lot you've got! What makes you breathe so hard? Are you sure you're not ill? Of course you're not! Now tell him to drive right over under that electric light and we'll have the reading circle. Oh, how nice and damp they are! What beautiful, beautiful newspapers—all about ME!"

"Oh-h, Dickon!" This in a very small, hushed voice.

"Yes, Maurice."

"This one says—it says right in real print—that I am—guess, Dickon—'a child-woman of superlative charm.'"

"You are, Maurice." In spite of his smile the man's agreement was almost reverent. "The description is truthful and the tribute is honest, I think. Even the critics may have their blessed visions. The praise is sweet to you, isn't it, Princess? It is plentiful now, but there is much more to come. Listen to this, dear. It speaks of the 'tender and ingratiating charm of her beautiful art.'"

Both little hands were clinging to his arm. A soft, stray tendril of her hair brushed his cheek. "Now kiss me, Dickon," she pleaded. "Now kiss me while I'm just a happy little girl alone with you. I want you to kiss me, Dickon."

The man's smothered exclamation was like a groan. Under the glare of the street light the lines in his face took on darkness and depth.

"No," he choked, "not that."

"Why, Dickon—well, it wasn't on your own account, anyway. It was just to celebrate. It was just for the clever men who wrote the reviews. See, this one says: 'A new star has risen to eclipse the recent luminaries.' And—

oh, look, Dickon, this one calls me 'a princess, regal and compelling, splendid and dominant, but above all enchanting in her arch witchery'! That's in the *Courier*. Isn't he a darling! And, 'the ephemeral, spritelike quality of her elfin personality'! That's the *Citizen*. Aren't you sorry you wouldn't kiss someone that was 'regal' and 'splendid' and 'enchanting in her witchery'? I don't think you'll ever have another chance. Oh, but here's the dearest of all. It's the *Record*. It calls me 'a delicate breath of lavender from an old garden by the sea.' Am I really like that, Dickon?"

"You are," answered the man with a break in his voice, "the most beautiful, the most fragrant, the most greatly to be desired thing in all the world. You are full, perfect womanhood and eternal child in one. You are—"

"Go on, Dickon; it's better than the critics."

The man reached for the trap. "Drive uptown. Grand Central," he ordered. "If you don't mind," he explained, "we will get under way before I do that again."

"Do that again! Don't you think it's nice to tell me that I'm nice, Dickon? I *am* nice. If I wasn't, I couldn't be Her Royal Highness Patricia. You are trying to be horrid."

The man shifted the position of his suit case and fixed his eyes on the horse.

"I am beautiful.

"And I am talented.

"And I am a fascinating young actress.

"Because if I weren't, Mr. Margate wouldn't give me big green moneys to be his youngest star. And if he likes me well enough to do that, you ought to like me well enough to tell me so, because I—I'm very fond of you, Dickon, dear."

"Maurise," asked the man gravely, "won't you stop being a child for a little while?"

"Don't you like it?"

"In play time, yes. Just now it doesn't accord. I want to tell you something."

"But, oh, Dickon, can't you under-

stand that I'm starting all over again—that I'm just beginning to live? All these long, lean years before haven't counted. It's just the years to come. Tonight I'm born new—a new girl, a new princess; and I want to be a child to feel it. I want to feel all the little delights and all the little hurts. They would be too small for grown-ups to notice, but I want to feel them just as we felt our first parties or being kept after school or going to the seashore or having it rain on Saturday. I want to feel them all—everywhere. I want to tingle with them. I've earned them, Dickon, I've earned them myself. I'm Her Royal Highness Patricia—'Mr. Margate's youngest star'—'a child woman of superlative charm.' I'm successful. All the world is opening before me for more success—New York—London—Paris—warmth—color—light—love—all the things I've yearned for. Yes, all the things I've prayed for. I'm the most popular princess in the world. I'm the happiest girl in the world. Let me be a child, Dickon. Oh, let me be a child!"

She ended in a little choking sob of wistful ecstasy, a small, furry figure, glowing, palpitating with joy. In full understanding the man beside her sat in silence. Very gently he gathered to himself one of the little, quivering hands.

"Be a child, Maurise," he said. "Be a child forever and always be very happy."

"But you said—"

"I only have to say—good-bye."

"What—no, no! No, no, Dickon! Oh, and you told him to drive to the station—you mean you're going away! You can't—you can't—you sha'n't—I won't let you go! Don't you see I'm just beginning to be happy? And I don't want to be happy without you! Oh-h-h, how foolish I am! You mean you're just going away for a little while."

"For a long while, dear. For a very long while, I'm afraid."

"Dickon! Dickon! Do you know what you're saying? Dear old Dickon, you don't mean it! Say you don't

mean it. Say quickly you don't mean it. Dickon, you can't go—you can't go! I need you so. Don't laugh that awful way! Don't leave me! I need you. Dickon! Dickon! Dickon!"

"Hush, Maurise," soothed the man. "It is only one of the things that the child feels poignantly—and forgets. You do not need me. If you did I should be at your call. Don't you see, Maurise, that you've ceased to need me now?"

"No, no, no!"

"Yes, Maurise, it is quite true—deadly true. You do not know the hard old world very well yet. Some day you will understand that people are very desirable to each other only so long as they share a common viewpoint. When the viewpoint changes the people become different. They do not see the same things in the same way, so the things do not look the same to them both. So, very slowly but very certainly, they begin to have different ideas about things and to misunderstand each other, and then it is only a very short time before they scarcely know each other at all. And, of course, if they don't know each other they don't retain any sense of loss. It is a very old law of the world, but it is a very wise law. It saves much struggling and pain. It is a sort of natural anesthetic for separations. We have shared a common viewpoint for a long time, Maurise, but now the viewpoints are different. I cannot follow you upward and you cannot stay below with me. You will be rich. I shall be poor. You will flash and scintillate. I shall be the merest glowworm. You will course here and there all over the world; you will see its beauty, its sunshine, taste all its pleasant fruits. I must plod in a narrow path, look at sordid things in half-darkness and eat the husks. I cannot share my husks and grayness with you, because you would not like them, and you cannot offer me your fruits and sunshine because that would be charity, Maurise, because that would hurt me constantly and because charity of that kind soon comes to seem mere duty—and duty

is the most unpleasant, irksome thing in life. No, we have to separate, Maurise, and we can't even wait for the natural anesthetic— You're not crying? Don't, lady dear, don't! Big girls don't cry. Princesses don't cry."

"Oh, Dickon, you're hurting—hurting—hurting! And it isn't true what you say, for all the big words! And princesses *do* cry when princes talk to them like that. You can't go away from me now. Do you mean to say that you won't ever walk with me and talk with me and eat things with me any more? That you won't loan me any more books that I ought to read and teach me about flowers and tell me when my hats are pretty and— Oh, Dickon, are you going to leave me just because you think I would leave you?"

"No, Maurise—dear little Maurise. Don't take it that way. There are reasons why I must go."

"There aren't any reasons at all. There sha'n't be any reasons. What are they? See, Dickon, I'm going to put my head on your shoulder whether you like it or not. Tell me what the reasons are."

"They are not pleasant, Maurise. I shall write to you about them later."

"No, Dickon, tell me now. Don't hurt me any more. If you don't tell me now, I shall suspect the most awful things. Is it another girl, Dickon? Is it another girl?"

"No, Maurise, it isn't another girl. It is a doctor."

"What?" She sat up very suddenly and stared at him with frightened eyes. "Do you mean to say you're being sent away for your health, Dickon?"

The man laughed. "For my lack of health," he answered. "Exile."

"And you're going now?"

"On the early train. I preferred to wait in the station rather than my rooms. It was lonely there."

"Then we'll drive away from the station and you shall see my doctor. Yours is stupid. You won't have to go away."

"It is not one doctor, Maurise. It is several, and they don't disagree. I can't wait longer. I have waited too

long already. I had to wait for the first night of 'Her Royal Highness Patricia,' you know. I had to see you win, Maurise."

"And where do you think Her Royal Highness Patricia is going to let you go?"

"To a place called Banff, Maurise."

She clung to him, shuddering. "Oh, not that, Dickon—not that!"

"Not quite that, Maurise, but very close to it. I have a good fighting chance. Don't cry. Don't sob so, dearest. Don't."

"Dickon—it's awful—awful!"

"Not so awful, Maurise, although I had not meant that you should know. I shall be quite comfortable and happy. I shall have a little shack of a place, for I can't afford the hotel or sanitarium, you know; it will be on the hillside, where I can look out over the valley, and I shall keep a cow—it will be good fun keeping a cow farmer fashion—and I shall do my own cooking—just fancy me fussing with pots and pans! Perhaps I shall even paste my handkerchiefs on the window, as you used to do. And all the while I shall have that big, splendid life in the open by day and at night the thought of you and your triumphs. Oh, I shall be happy, Maurise—never fear for that. I shall get quite chummy with that cow, you know. I shall probably tell her all about you. And at evening, when the stars come out, I shall pretend that they are your footlights, that behind them you are acting as you did tonight to an audience of just me and the mountains. And in time, you know, I shall get well, for it is a wonderful place for lungs. And then I shall come back, and some night you will look over into the front rows and see me there applauding 'Mr. Margate's youngest star,' the foremost actress of her day. Don't pity me. See, we are almost at the station. Forget all about it, Maurise. Think of tomorrow night and the lights and the applause and tell me good-bye."

"But, oh, Dickon, I didn't know you were ill! I've been a bad, selfish girl. I didn't know you were ill."

"I kept it from you. I didn't want to grieve you. I didn't wish to spoil your victory. I tried to steal away without letting you know at all, Maurise."

"And you're going away sick and alone?"

"Not so very sick, and not so terribly alone. There is that absurd but friendly cow, you know."

"And you think you're going to keep that cow yourself and do all your own cooking and paste your own handkerchiefs and live all alone with no one to look after you?"

"Surely, you will admit I am man enough to do that, Maurise."

"No, I won't—yes, I am not crying, Dickon, and I know perfectly well what I'm saying—I won't because—hold your head lower so I can put my arms around your dear, dear neck—I won't, because, Dickon—let me whisper it—I'm going with you."

"Oh, Maurise, dearest"—there were tears in the tired eyes—"God bless you forever and ever just for saying that—just for saying that! I know you mean it; I know you mean it from your very heart. But it cannot be. You know it cannot be—but it is a sweet thought to take into exile, Maurise—that you would have come."

"It can be. It shall be. I'm going with you, Dickon."

"Hush, Maurise, no!"

"I will not hush. I'm Her Royal Highness Patricia, and I'm going with my prince—away, way out to where the sun sets, to the day's end and—and yes, Dickon, if you go—into the night beyond—with you."

"Maurise, Maurise, you talk madness! You shall not go. You do not realize what it means, nor how weak and cowardly I should be to accept your sacrifice. You shall not go."

"I shall. You cannot stop me. No one can stop me. I shall go on your

train and I shall live in your house and I shall do your work and make you well, and the only way you can drive me away is to beat me, and then I shall crawl back as soon as the hurts will let me and I shall tell everybody that I belong to you."

"Maurise, you mad, mad girl! Do you know what you are saying? Do you know what you talk of giving up—your career, your happiness, your luxury, your very comfort, everything you have lived for—to share the lot of a wreck in obscurity, poverty, isolation, living death? Ah!" He faced her suddenly. "Wait until morning, cold, white morning! See Margate, read the papers again, read the notes of congratulation and the cards that will come with the roses, the violets and the orchids. Remember the cities and their rulers who will do you homage. Remember the great world that waits you. Remember my hut and the sordid life that goes with it. Remember all these things, Maurise. Remember them. Remember them."

"Oh, I know—I know—see, I'm quite calm. I know what I throw away and I know what I long for. It's not a stage kingdom. It's my prince. Oh, I see it all, Dickon. No more footlights, no more newspapers, no more painted canvas and written words, no more struggle and jealousy and strife! The mountains and that dear, homely old cow, and the hut on the hillside and the stars at evening and home—our home, Dickon—and my prince!"

"Maurise—the sacrifice—"

"My happiness."

"Your art, your work, your place in the world!"

"I follow my prince."

"To exile—and perhaps—"

"To battle—and triumph—and life— See, it's the station—the start of the journey! Hold me closer, Dickon—crush me—crush me—I love you!"



DOMESTIC felicity cannot be preserved in family jars.

L'AMOUR DES FEMMES

By J. C. PARK

IN the extreme northeast of France, almost on the border line, is an isolated village which time has forgotten in its onrush, leaving unmolested a scrap of centuries ago to wander down through today. There, until recently, lived one Jean Carageat—who was not French—his daughter Vera—who was not Russian—and his wife, the daughter of a Paris shopkeeper of the good sort, which in Paris is as much better than the average good sort at large as the bad sort is worse.

The Carageats lived always apart from the peasants, always alone except for one visitor. At odd intervals, and often without warning, there came to them a beautiful woman, for whom Vera was named and whom she worshiped as the ideal goddess of her realm of dreams. She did not know, then, that they lived in the lonely village simply to keep always ready there a midway hiding and resting place for Vera Filipava, one of the most beautiful and adored of Parisian women, alias Vera Figner, known in St. Petersburg as the most feared of all the secret foes of Russia, the arch-Nihilist, the soul and center of every political intrigue of her day. Very few, indeed, anywhere knew then that the two were one.

Beautiful presents the beautiful Filipava brought to her little namesake, and wonderful tales she told of wonderful Paris to the Vera nestling in her arms. And whatever she was to Paris or Petersburg, she was the gentlest, dearest and the sweetest of all sweet dreams to Vera Carageat.

It was only after the visits had long ceased that, from fragments of conversation between her parents, Vera

put together the sad story of her beloved Filipava and knew that, wonderful as she was, she was still a woman and must love; and that of all who loved her she must love one whom she could not marry and one who lived in the place of all places where it was most dangerous for her to go. But again and again, till once too often, she braved the dangers, entering the very inner circles of the mighty in Petersburg, because she loved him so.

At last the police were waiting for her and the end was Siberia. No, even Siberia was not the end. For, because her beauty and gentleness were still bribes by which she succeeded in communicating with her friends, she was consigned to a dungeon in the awful prison in the fortress of Peter and Paul, and for fifteen years she neither saw a human form nor heard a human voice except her own. And even that was not the end. The Government announced that she was released; but Vera Figner, bent and helpless, deaf and nearly blind, white-haired and toothless, mentally and physically a hopeless wreck, was only taken from the dungeon to make room for fresh ones; taken to an unnamed settlement beyond the Arctic Circle, where she was left by order of the Government to live or die according to the mercy of the half-civilized inhabitants. The end will come only when heaven helps the poor Filipava by ordering her real release.

The impression which was left upon the little Vera's mind was deep, and it grew with her until it filled her. The love of her idol she idealized. The Nihilism she hated. One was her crown

of glory. The other was the scorpion that killed.

"If ever I love a man," she said to herself a hundred times, "I will be everything to him that can help him, and I'll be nothing, nothing at all, to anyone else."

There was no one in the little village for her to love, but the dream thought grew till it became the only idea of her life-to-be. And when, long after the sometimes guest was gone, and Jean Carageat himself reëntered active service, was recognized in Russia as Ivan Koursoff and his face, too, was turned toward Siberia, Vera's mother remembered that she was a Parisian, and drifted back again, and Vera took her dream to the beautiful Filipava's realm.

Her mother opened a flower booth, as the readiest means to a livelihood, for all Paris lives on flowers. From the narrow Way of Life, with its solemn minuet in the throb of the Bourdon Bell by Esmeralda's dungeon, to the Broad Way for the Dance of Death, with its voluptuous revelry, every path of Paris is garlanded and every breast is boutonnièred.

Vera was sixteen and everything helped her to be helpful. She was pretty and fresh from the fields, like the flowers, and kind and good because her idol was so kind and good and she knew of nothing else worth emulation. She was happy, too, to be in Paris, where the beautiful Filipava once lived and where all her dreams centered. Each morning she took from the booth a basket of pretty *boutonnieres* and walked down the Avenue des Acacias, to catch the legislators out for an early airing, then past the beauty shops on the Place Vendome, for the lovely women fresh from the massage, and along the Rue Castiglione, for the dwellers in the fashionable hotels, and under the arches of the Rue de Rivoli, for the *boulevardiers* seeking exercise in the shade, and on to the Latin Quarter, to sell to students, at a discount, whatever might be left. And nothing was surer than what happened, that she started with more and more flowers in

her basket and sold them at higher and higher prices. With many it was not so much the *boutonniere* as the seller of which they thought. For pretty little Vera was a pearl of price. Paris always sets a market value upon such pearls and many a one, through the flowers, sought to purchase the pearl. But Vera went her way with a smile for everyone and nothing more for anyone.

Oh, but that smile, that smile! Was anything ever so bewildering! It was never meant to be, for Vera knew no more that she was beautiful than the flowers knew how pretty they were. When her eyes drooped and laughed and her lips parted and her teeth sparkled in the sunshine, with dimples set in roses on her cheeks, and soft, dark eyebrows, clinging and drooping about her eyes, to keep the sun from mischief there while they were laughing, she had not a bit better idea how utterly ravishing she was than had the buds, half opened, dripping with the tiny drops which she sprayed over them when she put them in the basket. She only felt that when a man paid her three or four times the price of a flower and said sweet things to her as she pinned it on his coat, it was the proper thing to thank him, and she bobbed her pretty face and smiled distractingly, and went her way. It was the same for rich or poor, for anyone who was kind to her—and who could help being kind to Vera? But there was something about it so fresh and spontaneous, like the songs the birds sing to the sunrise, that we all thought it came for us alone, and as she went her way she left us each heart-throbbing, sure that the next day, or the next, there would be something more than smiles. Perhaps there was a touch of jealousy in it, which made me watch the way she went and take it more to heart.

In the Latin Quarter there lived a young artist fellow from the South, named Maglione—and a good name it was for him. He was broad and tall and strong, dark as an Italian, graceful as a Greek. He had no end of blue-

black hair and his eyebrows were heavy and black. The black lashes curled under them as though singed by the deep, sullen fires that smoldered in the large, dark eyes. His upper lip would sometimes lift its soft, black mustache from the perfect teeth of Southern France when he was angry—he was very often angry—and when he smiled. I think he never smiled except on Vera.

I knew him rather well in those days and better later, for I was one of the very few who liked him. I liked him because he was so ferociously somber—except when he smiled on Vera. He was distinctly a dreamer. He dreamed more than he felt. He felt more than he thought. He thought more than he put upon canvas. So that while the visions in which he really lived were marvels, his productions, upon which he must exist, hardly better than kept him alive. There was always something in his work which seemed touching finger tips with inspiration. But there was always so much besides that was execrable. When we were not afraid of rousing that phenomenal wrath of his, which showed his white teeth and curled his eyelashes with up-flashes of the latent fires, we used to laugh at his work and say that the reason he signed it—which he did with a dreamer's mysterious cipher—was to let the purchaser know which was the bottom of the picture. But poor as he was, he was always immaculate in his dress. It was neither loud nor ostentatious, but never, with a single exception, did I see the man when he was not properly and precisely clad.

Maglione the Magnificent we called him; a gloomy, grand lion. He was a figure painter in ideal embryo, but he was so poor that he could not even indulge to the rarest occasional degree in the figure painter's dire necessity—a worthy model. At the schools, when he could afford the pittance, he painted from the life; but live models, standing in set poses for rooms full of nondescript students are not inspirations to dreamers. So Maglione grumbled and growled and shook his fist in the face of the

imaginary destiny that prevented him from developing what was in him by depriving him of the necessary possibilities.

It was then that out of nothing he fell into the way of giving what he had—a sou—to Vera for one of her leftovers. Heaven only knows the hows and whys of such things, but in no long time it came to pass that every morning Maglione was walking slowly up the Rue de Rivoli and Vera was walking slowly down at the same time; and that just as she received double and treble for her flowers from some, she was giving him double and treble for his sou, hiding the best from the booth in the straw at the bottom of her basket, to slip it out when she saw him coming. And that was not all, for as the hearts of others throbbed when Vera smiled, her little heart felt strange tuggings at its strings when Maglione's white teeth showed under his black mustache.

They never seemed to say much to each other. Maglione seldom spoke to anyone except when he was angry. Yet it came about in some way that when they met and the sou was in Vera's basket and the *boutonnière* from under the straw was pinned on Maglione's coat, he turned and walked back with her through the Quarter as far as the wretched stairs which led to his attic studio. By and by Vera even climbed the stairs with him, to put the little room in order and leave in a broken mug whatever of flowers were unsold in her basket.

Sweet, little, laughing Vera was so very good that her whole soul thrilled with joy in the thought that she was being really helpful, at last, helpful in making something in the world brighter and better, even if it was only one miserable little room up under the tiles. And happiest of all was Vera that her helpfulness was for such a great, grand man, bringing softness, if not sunshine, into those cloud-shadowed eyes and parting those sad lips with smiles. She believed she was the happiest girl in France, and I think she was.

As for Maglione, I sometimes wondered whether he knew that Vera was a

living thing, at all—anything more than a part of his dreams. He certainly never cared a straw whether the dust lay deep or disappeared, whether his bed was ever better made than he made it, whether things were in one place or another, whether the broken mug had flowers—but yes. He was an artist. He loved the beautiful. He must have loved flowers to have begun paying a sou for them. And Vera was beautiful—beautifully beautiful—a flower of flowers. I wonder if he ever loved Vera? Dear, little, laughing Vera!

One day a thought, between dreams, dawned on Maglione, much as it must have dawned on him to spend a sou for the first flower—and from that he fell into the way of it. The thought dawned on him one day when Vera had been washing some soiled thing in the studio, with her sleeves rolled up to the shoulders, the way she had seen the village washerwomen. Maglione sat moodily smoking a cigarette. The drooping lids were so nearly closed over his black eyes that only a narrow glint betrayed the fact that he was still awake. I have seen him sit that way an evening through, hardly civil enough to rouse himself and say good night—simply dreaming. Vera shook out the cloth, and reaching up as high as possible, she pinned it to the window shade, where it could hang in the sun and dry. Without moving, Maglione said:

"Your arms are beautiful, so. Hold them there till I sketch them."

Vera's heart gave a great throb and she held her arms that way, hard as it was, till Maglione had made several sketches. In spite of the pain her eyes were laughing and her cheeks were dimples all the time, because she was really helping—helping the man whom she did not know she loved.

When the idea once dawned on Maglione, it was like the idea of the sou and the flowers—it grew. And Vera was so generous and good that it filled her with the purest joy to see how much it meant to him to have her pose for a little while each noon. To save more time for it she began earlier in the morning and walked faster, without

loitering about the beauty shops or at the doors of waiting carriages on the Rue Castiglione, and to atone for it she ran all the way back to the booth from the Quarter, so that her mother should not suspect. It was not that her conscience troubled her. Her heart throbbed with a joy too high and too holy for that. It was only that she knew, instinctively, as everyone knows who really loves—whether they know that they love or not—that another, even a mother, could not possibly understand. And no more could they. No more ever can they. No more ever will they. It is the deferring to others, in imagination or reality, matters which they must see from another side, questions which they can only answer upon ice-bound theories and heartless tenets, which turns the day to night and life to death for a hundred where it saves one soul from the bonds of iniquity, to plunge it, instead, into the gall of bitterness.

So the idea which dawned upon Maglione grew. And the better he looked the better he saw how regally beautiful the laughing Vera was, till he had realized his dreams and filled his sketch slips, so far as heads and necks and arms and draperies could help. But by that time the fires of genius were blazing and his soul burned for the curves and contours, the lights and shadows, the glow of life, the flesh tints, the reality of all the beautiful rest. Maglione had no diplomacy or sophistry, but Vera needed none. Only to know his wishes and respond gave her such joy that little by little she gave him all. She gave him everything and was happy as a bird that sings to sunshine, because she loved him so.

She thought—of course she thought that he loved her. And possibly he did. Who am I that I should hunt for moths in brother artists' eyes? At any rate, it is but the fair truth to say for Maglione that he never tried to deceive Vera; and never for an instant did she think he had. If she mistook the depth of the meaning in the parted lips and lightened eyes, and later the flushed cheeks, the tender touch and warm

caress, growing as everything grew with Maglione, into strong arms drawing her very soul so close to his, if Vera mistook all this for love— No, no, Vera was not mistaken. Maglione must have loved her. He loved the beautiful. Only he loved art, his art, so much more that, except when he drifted out of dreams for a moment and became a man, it never occurred to him that anything, even Vera, was more than a part of them and Art. And Vera was so happy to be even a part of the dreams and the Art that her laughing, loving self was more and more absorbed till it was all engulfed, enveloped in the dream, the love, the Art—whichever was uppermost.

The happiest moment she had known—happier even than when the beautiful Filipava held her in her arms and told her of beautiful Paris—was up in the little attic when Maglione held her in his arms and told her a more wonderful tale of a great dream he was dreaming, of a grand masterpiece, a Goddess of Something, wrapped in clouds and her beautiful hair. It should go to the Salon. It should take the world by storm. It should set him on a pinnacle of fame and sell for a fortune, and poverty and privation would fly away. Vera had thought so much of Maglione that she had taken the poverty and privation only as a part of the joy; but the dream tale filled her with rapture because he told her that she was to be the model; that without her help he could not accomplish it. She ran back to the booth that day on feet that felt no pavement, for they touched only the silver clouds of the real, as Maglione would have them in his ideal. All the time she whispered to herself of the monarch it would make of Maglione, and of her supernal lot to be the necessary thing that was to help him to his throne.

So little by little the shielding draperies prescribed by social ethics fell away for study after study leading up to the grand design, when it should finally take shape. And if ever a figure painter really improved in strides phenomenal it was Maglione. Genius

crept from his heart to his brain and from his brain to his brush. More than once we critics of his previous work were cast into confusion by marvelous bits which he showed—a hand or a foot, a leg, an arm, a shoulder quivering with life—as the result of a noon hour of study from the real.

Better than he knew—better than he stopped to consider, at any rate—Maglione builded, away from the easel, an altar to the God of Love; and Vera was so happy to be for him the model, upon either altar, that neither did she stop to consider. She lived without a thought of anything except that she was helping him and making him happier, because she loved him so. She lived in that dearest of all deliriums, when the warp and woof of every heart throb means the best that is in one for one's better self.

Maglione had not deceived her. Vera knew that away in the South of France there was a woman living upon a small estate which he had inherited and which he had left to her when he fled to Paris—fled because there was nothing in common between them; nothing but the law of man that whom God hath joined, through the advocacy of the Church, no one shall put asunder. She knew all about it, and how he had come empty-handed to Paris to fight for the glory of the genius which he felt was in him. She knew and she adored him for it, and more than ever was happy that she was helping him where the other failed and making him happier on the way. Sometimes a thought of the nearing future would force itself between the exultant throbs of joy, but so little did it penetrate that the shock was like a thunderbolt from pink-tinted mists when mother eyes could not be any longer blind and turned upon the happy flower girl with all the proverbial wrath of the good sort, and the mother lips told her never again to cross her path unless she came to her with a marriage certificate in her hand, as a passport to the mother love which is ideally inalienable.

Then there came one bitter hour for the laughing Vera—the hour when she

returned to Maglione to tell him of her distress and found him so engrossed over a potboiler that he seemed hardly to know that she was speaking, much less what she was saying. Bursting into tears at last, she turned toward the door trying to sob good-bye, when he looked up and said:

"If your mother doesn't want you, why don't you come here? The room back of this is vacant. We can get it for a song. These things are selling better now. I can pay for it and you can cook our meals and save that way. It will give you time to amount to something in posing."

"Can I?" trembled on her quivering lips between a smile and tears.

"Of course you can, silly," he replied. "Now run back to mamma and get your things and say good-bye till she's ready to forgive. As soon as it's too dark to paint we'll go out and fix up about the room."

Maglione was painting again, trying to realize something on a small canvas; but the tears on Vera's lashes were turned to rainbows by the laughing eyes behind them, and the tears on her cheeks were lost in dimples as she hurried away happier than ever. Why not? Was not Vera Filipava her idol and mentor in all but the fatal blunder of not giving all, everything, to the one man she loved? And sometimes, in the weeks which followed, we really thought them ideally happy, those two so unsophisticated Babes in the Woods in Bohemia.

No mortal ever changed as Maglione changed. He was a dreamer still, but he dreamed dreams which brought a new light to his dark eyes. His lips were less sullenly closed. He painted better, sold more and talked. We believed that love had transformed him, *if* he really loved. And we worshiped the laughing Vera, not as the Goddess of Something, for the Salon and fame and fortune, but as the Queen of Sunshine who had worked the miracle.

In the first flush of the new life the great dream was almost forgotten. It was too large and absorbing a concep-

tion to intrude just then. Besides, Maglione was doing beautiful work in little potboilers in the nude; and it was such a luxury to have a few of the luxuries of life, together with Vera's love, that there's little wonder he forgot. It was Vera herself who called him back, shortly after the baby was born. And the moody fellow, always so erratic, was no sooner coaxed again to dream that dream than he forthwith forgot every other and even Vera.

Potboilers ceased altogether, and little by little the luxuries left them and the necessities followed. In utter oblivion Maglione dreamed on. Vera could no longer go out on the street and sell flowers when she must be at home all day to cook and sew and pose and nurse the baby, but she thought of other ways to help—only, always, to help. It was her one ambition from her earliest thoughts of the life-to-be, away in the little village. She thought of the evenings, the evenings that for the first while had been such ineffable hours to her; the evenings when she could leave the dreamer dreaming by the cradle. And if a poignant flash brought out the handwriting on the wall for her at the readiness with which Maglione consented to forego their evenings, Vera's generous heart concealed it.

In their brief days of luxury Paul Delmet had sometimes been their guest for a Sunday-night supper, the good Paul Delmet, who died a year later—heaven rest his ashes and his soul! He had praised her singing and laughed when she sang the merry village songs of the North. Well he might, for like all else of Vera there was sunshine in her singing. So she went to Paul Delmet in her distress—as hundreds of others went to him—and he helped her as he helped so many, so many who stood in need. Aye, if in the measure that ye mete, withal—mete to the least of these—it shall be measured to you again, then wherever thou art today, Paul Delmet, the friend of the friendless of Paris, they are dealing into thy bosom good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over. For thou didst even so to them.

Paul Delmet had seen many a hard bit of uphill in his day, but at that time he was at the zenith of his success—the position where so many cease from troubling about the poor they have left behind. He was the last of the merrymaking song specialists of Montmartre, singing his own songs at the street corners first, and selling copies for two sous to whoever would buy. His “*Stances de Manon*” had made him the rage in Paris. His “*Vieux Mendiant*” was capturing the world. The homely, big-hearted, little-bodied, awfully jolly, frightfully near-sighted man! What a flood of happiness he set adrift in one way and another through the length and breadth of the high and low of Paris! With his violin and his songs he had crept up from the street corners to become king of the *cabaret* when Vera appealed to him. He taught her his merriest songs—his laughing songs—and she sang into them more than he had ever dreamed was there and made him greater even while he was making her.

He took her to the *cabaret* on the Rue Victor Massé, and every night it was crowded with the *haute société*. Great ladies of Napoleonic families and men whose word was law upon the Bourse were there to smile and roar over the laughing Vera singing Delmet's laughing songs. The gay prancers of the Rue de la Paix were there. They had quite forgotten the little flower girl and turned ravenously to this beautiful new star, but the flower girl's smile, still like the bewildering provincial sunshine, was all that ever repaid them for their gushing raptures. Sometimes Delmet took Vera to sing in Noctambules, down in the Quarter, where we of common prices could rend the air with bravas and rend our hearts in efforts to win from Vera something more than smiles—for who could help it, high or low? Were we not Parisians? What is Paris for?

At that time, at least, I doubt if Maglione would have cared a straw if we had succeeded. He had so gone back into his dream of dreams that once more he considered us all only beastly

annoyances, and even Vera but a necessary incident when he happened to require her. And Vera felt it. I am sure that she felt it, for more than once I saw tears making her eyes brighter as they rested on the gloomy blackness poised on Maglione's broad shoulders. But she never meant that we should know it, and never a single block would she go with any of us on the road to Potinville, the city where Dame Grundy dwells. And still she was happy, even in those days—and why not? She was making all Paris laugh. She was making little Paul Delmet happy, singing so much more out of his songs than he had dreamed into them. And, withal, had she not two instead of one at home to love? And even if she did not make Maglione seem as happy as she would have liked—as happy in herself and the baby—she was at least supporting all three of them, and they were living better than they had ever lived before. She knew that the dream must be growing and that she was making as smooth as possible the way to its realization—the masterpiece—the Goddess of Something, for fortune and fame and the Grand Salon!

There were signs, too, that it was growing; for had not Maglione at last bought the magnificent canvas and mounted it, and a monstrous easel to hold it, and a high stool to reach it, and all with the money she had earned? With “*Help, help and make happy,*” the motto of her life, how could she be sad? Oh, *l'amour des femmes*! Oh, secret of Paris: how to suffer and not be sad! *Cela m'est égal!*

But the baby died; and poor, broken-hearted Vera tried in vain to sing the laughing songs for Delmet in the gay *cabaret*. Maglione would not even go with her to the burial—he was so busy sketching in the grand design; but he told her to hurry back and pose for him. He did not shed a tear; which made Vera shed all the more—more than enough for both, because she loved him so.

It happened just at the *Jour des Rois*, the New Year feast of Epiphany, when every café was ablaze and every

street a blare, scintillating with the poetry of piety. The day after the funeral Delmet went to Maglione's rooms early, hoping against hope that he could persuade Vera to pull herself together and sing that night; not so much for the fact that there would be great money in the *cabaret* through the holidays as that the excitement would help to drag her away from the sorrow in the empty cradle and the gloom enshrouding Maglione. But Maglione only remembered that she had gone out and he was angry because he wanted her to pose. Delmet went on the street again, muttering: "Some paths of glory lead by queer curves to the grave."

He was a better prophet than he knew. But he fancied he could tell where to look for Vera and turned down the Boulevard, lined on either side with little booths for the two weeks' *jours de fête*. Rapid progress was not easy there, for it was nearly six o'clock, when all society is out in Paris, shopping and showing itself, in the mystic, rose-tinted mists of a winter's twilight. The streets were crowded with tempting visions in priceless furs enfolded in creations of satin and laces, flashing for an instant, then lost in pink obscurity. But dodging unheeding among them Delmet made his way out to the cemetery, creeping silently through shadows up to a little unmarked spot where he found Vera kneeling, as he thought. She had laid on the grave the universal New Year's gift, the little *galette*, for the feast of Epiphany—a cake, just a roll of crust with a tiny china doll in the center. He said nothing till she turned away. Even then he said nothing. He simply walked silently back beside her, through the darkening evening and the brighter glowing streets. He said nothing of the *cabaret*, but gently took her hand as they approached a church near her home and led her in. He left her there, kneeling and sobbing. It was better than singing and laughing. He left her with only a prayer and a silent pressure of his kind hand; but he did not realize, nor did she, that it was their last parting this side of where there

shall be no more tears, neither sorrow nor crying.

In his rage over the interruption Maglione turned against the whole of us and declared that such a grand theme as his dream could not expand within him and grow on such a canvas in those crowded confines. He said that he must be alone; and in saying it I know that he included Vera only as he included the canvas and easel. Vera had already laid by a little for the next rainy day, and suddenly, without a word of warning or farewell, they left us. No one knew where they had gone; and we only felt instinctively how much it must have cost poor Vera to leave the realm where her beautiful Filipava once lived, where her mother was and where the baby lay buried—where she had been so happy and, for only a few hours, so sad. But the one dogma of her ethics was, "All for the man I love."

Of the months that followed who knows? I am glad that I, at least, do not. One morning I received an incoherent note from Maglione, begging me to come at once to an address which he gave me—a village in the extreme northeast of France, almost on the border line; an isolated village which time had forgotten in its onrush, a scrap of centuries ago left unmolested to wander into today. The house stood away from the village and only one room was furnished. Oh, but such furnishing!

The room was neither small nor low. At one end stood a giant easel, supporting a large canvas. Before it was a high stool. At the other end on the floor of the room was a straw mattress. Between them there was so little and all broken. Dear heaven, how little! How broken! At one corner of the painting Maglione knelt, putting the last graceful curve on his mysterious cipher signature. It was Maglione, haggard, black and wild, covered only by ragged trousers and an unlaundered shirt hanging open at the neck, the black breast hair protruding—Maglione the immaculate!

He did not notice me, and for the

moment I forgot him, too. The painting on the easel was beyond the reach of words, magnificent! It was the birth of Aphrodite, Goddess of Love, bursting from the womb of the foaming sea, waking among the marvelous tints that touch the waves! A triumph of genius! A masterpiece! The meteor had flashed in Maglione and in the flame expired. He rose slowly and glared at me with sunken, dark-rimmed, blood-shot eyes, set in a face emaciated, but flushed, dark red. Swaying unsteadily, he flung his palette and brushes madly on the floor. With one hand he pointed to the canvas, with the other to the straw bed.

"One is the price of the other," he said. "You were the only decent one I knew, so I sent for you, to give them both to you. They are both my work."

He turned away. Hatless, coatless, barefooted, he left the room. I have never seen him since nor heard of him. God grant I never may! I turned from the matchless dream, the beautiful,

laughing Vera, lying in the soft arms of the tinted sea foam—glorious Goddess of Love—finished at last and ready for the Grand Salon and fame and fortune; and crossing the empty room I knelt upon the floor beside the straw; for on it lay, emaciated to a shadow, another baby on her arm, the white, starved Vera.

Poor, beautiful sacrifice! It was the price of love, and she had paid it sooner even than her Filipava. Poor Vera! And tears are all that I can give to you, in return for the smiles which you have given me. But your life was far from lost, sweet, laughing Vera. On Maglione it was thrown away, just as your Filipava threw hers away on something else; but many a soul was made happier because you were, and will always be happier because you have been, Fairy of Sunshine. And the little white birds that tell the Judge of All about the good deeds done will be thick around you in that day. That's something, Vera.



FATE

By CHARLES W. SNOW

HE plied his pen for the sons of men,
To lessen their toil and woe,
But the poor buffoons ignored his runes
Till his hopes in life sank low.

When he tested the fears of the quickening years
And wary of moralists grew,
He sang one day an aimless lay,
And it echoed the whole world through.

So the work that he wrought for human thought
Men spurned with a pitying look,
While the random play of a lazy day
They claimed and called his book.



IF beauty is skin deep, we should not wonder if some matrimonial ventures look like skin games.

IN THE PALM GARDEN

By SARAH GUERNSEY BRADLEY

THE Duchess smiled adorably and looked me squarely in the eye over her glass of champagne.

The Duchess—all her friends use the nickname—has a way of leaning both arms on the table, and holding her glass with the thumbs and forefingers of both pretty hands, just below the level of her big gray eyes. The pose is effective, and I'm sure she knows it is.

"I'm glad your name is Jack," she said. The Duchess's eyes are expressive.

"Thanks to my sponsors in baptism," said I, bowing as low as the table would permit.

"It's a very nice name."

"Unusually so!"

"It sounds so honest."

"Rather upright, I think myself."

"And it has been peculiarly fatal with me," she went on.

This was getting interesting. The Duchess was striking her gait. I had been warned against the Duchess.

"How so?" I asked.

"Well, to be frank, I have liked two or three men in my time, and, by a curious coincidence, they have all been named Jack." I moved my chair a bit closer, and I can swear the waiter smiled—they know the game so well!

"Yes, all Jacks," she repeated dreamily. Her husband's name was James. I also thought of Dick Kelley, but said nothing.

"There was Jack Winthrop—and Jack Hudson—and Jack Huston—and Jack Irving. I never should have really liked you if your name hadn't been Jack!"

"Glad I had *something* to recommend me," I said. The Duchess was deli-

cious, although perhaps some of her methods *were* a bit obvious. She was thirty years old by actual count. In experience, she was at least fifty—some women said seventy-five. But women are so often malicious where a woman so attractive as the Duchess is concerned.

"Your eyes are blue, too."

"So I've been told. I'm color-blind myself."

"And your hair waves in just the same way." She contemplated me critically.

"What way?" said I. I hate "same ways."

"Like Jack the Fourth's," she said calmly.

"What was he, the Jack of Hearts?" I asked. She thought a moment.

"Yes, I think so," she said slowly. "He certainly was the Knave, and—yes, we'll call him the Jack."

"Four Jacks are all the law allows— isn't that so?"

"You'll do," she laughed.

"But perhaps you like imperfect packs?" I queried hopefully.

"That depends. When the stakes are not too high."

This was clearly one on me. Out of self-respect I immediately proposed a toast to the Four Jacks in the Perfect Pack. She assented. The toast was drunk. Then the orchestra began the "Toreador Song."

"I love that," said the Duchess.

"Why?"

"Oh, for a lot of reasons. The fifth reason is they played that the night I first met you. That was a whole month ago." (Women are the only animals in the world with a memory

and respect for dates.) "We were sitting here in the Palm Garden. That's the very table, right over there—desecrated tonight by those awful people," and her dainty nose went up as she glanced at the heterogeneous collection of near humans who were seated there. "That night you were very much interested in a most astonishing person at the other end of the room. You knew her, you said. I said that she had a great deal of color. You said that wine always flushed her cheeks. I marveled." The Duchess has a most inconvenient memory. "I christened her the Unattainable in the Blue Sheath."

"I remember," I laughed.

"Is she still the Unattainable?"

"She never was *the* Unattainable," I sighed deeply.

"Really?" said the Duchess. She very properly divides the word into three syllables. "Then there is an Unattainable?"

"Isn't there always?" I mourned.

"I have heard of such things," said she. "Do I know her?"

"She is your best friend." The Duchess looked surprised. "And your worst enemy," I added. She bit her lip and frowned. It was not just what she had expected.

"Well, here's to the Unattainable!" She raised her glass to her lips.

"You mustn't drink *this* time," I interposed.

"Why not?" she demanded.

"Just because." The orchestra glided into the chorus of the only waltz song of the last two years. We both laughed. But she let me drink alone. Orchestras help a lot sometimes.

"Now *you* mustn't drink *this* time—to the Fifth Jack," and she let her eyes rest on me just long enough to give me temporary aberration.

"But the Unattainable is married," I complained.

"Yes," she sighed. She understood my past participate. "So was the Jack of Hearts."

"Marriage is so inconvenient," I hazarded.

"Yes, the Queens marry the Kings and then fall in love with the Jacks."

"It's all the fault of the pack, I believe," said I.

"Yes, things certainly do get mixed up in the shuffle."

"Suppose the Kings were all Jacks!" I suggested.

"Then the game would be worth the candle," said she.

"Ah, Love, could you and I with Him conspire

To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Remold it nearer to the Heart's Desire?"

I quoted. (I have never yet found any sort of case old Omar wouldn't fit.)

"Heav'n but the vision of fulfilled Desire," she slung back at me. Clearly there was no feasting the Duchess. I must try again.

"Inconstancy is a virtue when one goes from good to better," said I dogmatically.

"But there's always the chance—"

"The chance?"

"That the better will prove worse than the good."

"That has occurred to me," said I.

"It has kept *me* from making the experiment," said she.

Such honesty was refreshing. No wonder people found the Duchess fascinating. Perhaps she *was* seventy-five in experience.

"When are you coming up to see me?" demanded the Duchess suddenly.

"I don't know—perhaps never."

I was growing gloomy. I hated to think of the Duchess at the head of a house, bossing servants, ordering meals, paying bills. She was meant for music and violets and champagne—oh, yes, always champagne!

"But I *want* you to come."

"I'd come frequently if it were not—I was getting foolish. I realized it."

"If it were not—"

"For fear that I'd get too fond of you," I blurted defiantly.

"Impossible," returned she.

"It's safer to stay away."

"Safer! I loathe the safe, safer, safest!" she laughed. "Promise to come—two weeks from today."

"All right; that's a bargain," and we shook hands on it.

"Oh, I forgot, we've dined. One may believe everything a man says *before* dinner, but one should put no faith in promises made *after* the feast," said the Duchess sententiously.

"That's all very well, but in *this* case"—my look, I'm sure, was expressive—at least I tried hard to *make* it so.

"It's getting late," said the Duchess.

"Late! I loathe late, later, latest! It never can be late when you and I are together," said I.

"Oh, yes, it can." The Duchess was getting practical. "Everyone is leaving," she added, which was true. We were the only people in the Palm Garden besides five or six sleepy waiters.

"Well, one last toast—to—"

"To our friends," interrupted the Duchess. "Whoever they may be, wherever they may be and however much they may love us! That is a very nice toast—it is all-embracing and means a great deal"—the Duchess's eyes were reeking with expression—"or means nothing. A *very wise* toast."

"I know one just as wise," said I. "To ourselves!"

"There could be no wiser—nor better," she laughed.

I helped her into her evening coat.

"Don't put on your gloves," I pleaded.

"And why not?" asked the Duchess.

"Because I like to see your hands," I said.

The Duchess promptly put on *both* gloves, but she let me button them for her. I was grateful for this small crumb of comfort.

We settled ourselves in the taxicab. Her eyes were like stars.

"We've had a nice time," I said.

"Even so," she agreed.

"Why must it all come to an end?"

"Why?" she said wistfully.

"Why are the best things, the only things we really care for, so fleeting, so evanescent, so dreamlike?"

"I'm no answerer of riddles, Mr. Jack the Fifth."

"Why can't

"Heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, forever ride!"

I am far gone when I quote Browning!

"I could ride from here to—to—to San Francisco with you like this," I blurted, with a sudden drop from the heights of Robert B.

"But think what the cab fare would be!" she laughed. The Duchess was getting so practical. She lifts you up to the clouds—she makes you believe you can hope for almost anything; the next second, with some such remark as that, she lets you down with a sickening thud. I was getting cross with her.

"You have no sentiment," I said.

"Really?" I paid no attention to the three syllables this time.

"Absolutely no heart," I went on.

"I hardly see how you are qualified to judge," said she.

"I don't believe you ever really cared for anyone in your life."

"Remember, I am married," she said coldly. I have always considered that remark of hers cowardly.

"Do *you* always remember it?" I said unwisely.

"You could never make me forget it."

"What about the Fifth Jack?" said I.

"I like your conceit," she laughed. That laugh was exasperating. It ought to have warned me.

"Well, what about the Four Jacks?"

She laughed more heartily than ever. That laugh was my undoing.

"And what about Dick Kelley?" I played my trump card.

"Stop!" she blazed. I had touched the vulnerable spot. Every life has one hidden away somewhere.

The taxicab halted in front of the big apartment house.

"Thank Heaven, I am here at last," said the Duchess.

I had spoiled everything by my polishiness. I cursed myself inwardly.

"Good night." Ice was hot in comparison to her tone.

"Will you forgive me?" I pleaded.

"You drove me to it."

She softened somewhat. Nothing pleases a woman so much as an open acknowledgment of that sort.

"You were rude," she said severely.

"I know I was—I was everything beastly."

"You might show the mark of the beast again."

"But I shan't. Forgive me," I begged. The chauffeur coughed discreetly and I lowered my voice.

"Well?" The tone was hesitant.

"Then you will?" I whispered joyfully.

"Yes, I think so." Her tone was bored. Clearly this was forgiveness, but not absolution.

"And I may be the Fifth Jack?" I implored.

"There's only *one* Jack; the rest was all nonsense, seasoned perhaps with a bubble or two. You see, I'd heard of you—*similia similibus!*" and her laugh rang out merrily.

"*One Jack!*" I shouted so loudly that a window, miles in the air above us, opened noisily.

"Yes," said the Duchess softly, and a new light came into her big gray

eyes. "Perhaps some time, five or ten years from now, I'll let you see him. He's been in bed and sound asleep for hours, and he'll be four years old tomorrow—I mean today. And we're sailing for Genoa a week from tomorrow." (I thought of my promise to go and see her in two weeks' time, and I all but groaned aloud. Clearly, in this menagerie, *I* was the goat.) "No, no, I don't care to have you go up in the lift with me. Good night," and before I could say another word, the door of the lift slid shut and my beautiful Duchess, nodding gaily and smiling triumphantly, vanished from my sight.

She was clever, deliciously so. But I still think I owe Dick Kelley one for my *congé*, and every time I feel peevish, I am more than half inclined to *believe* in the Four Jacks in the Perfect Pack!



THE IMPS OF THE WIND

By MARGARET STEWART

BLOWING, blustering, bellowing,
Beating their steeds, the rain,
Howling with harrowing cadence
Like cries of people in pain.

Crying, screeching, calling,
Laughing with devilish joy,
Using old earth as a race track
Making all nature their toy.

Leaves ask earth for a refuge,
Great boughs bend but to break,
Waves seek rest in deep caverns
With the life of the sea in their wake.

But still these mad horsemen ride onward
Careless 'gainst what they have sinned,
These fearless gods of all freedom—
The imps that ride in the wind.

THE DREAMER

By HENRY HULL

KINGSTON was proud of McVee, as people are proud of any local deity, whether of good or evil. Therefore his failure was the wonder of the town. For years he had worn the honors of the wealthiest citizen, and his downfall outraged settled conviction. It strained the imagination to grasp the idea that one who had been envied for his money could not pay his debts. And what, Kingston further wondered, must be the feelings of McVee himself, who lived for and took his being from his wealth?

But McVee had one sentiment which rivaled, indeed overshadowed, his love of money, and that was his love of his wife. Patty herself, twenty years his junior in age, many generations removed in birth and tradition, had never guessed the dumb passion she had inspired in him. He gave it no utterance. He never thought of attempting it. But under a cloak of somewhat uncouth kindness, which she mistook for friendship, he wore a consuming and measureless love. He delighted in her, in every word and gesture of her, in every feature and bit of her. It even embraced what things she had touched and given a suggestion of her personality. There was a kind of grandeur in the strength and encompassing wideness of his love, and something pitiable in its inarticulate depth. He knew vaguely that it was not returned. Patty left him in no doubt as to that. But in her constant company he had in a measure found contentment, knowing, if he could imagine there was a more, that he could ask no more of her.

It can be imagined that such a love as McVee's took form in no tenderness toward its object. He was a silent man in every mood, in enjoyment and anger, and even in hate. His failure had brought with it the danger of losing Patty, along with his other possessions. So he had always looked upon her. His sentiment, if his savage passion could be so called, had in it no element of faith or trust. He held her by force of what he had—as he held other luxuries—and not by anything he was.

Because of his fear, his attitude toward her had undergone a change which she could not understand. He would sit for hours in silence staring at her—glowering, she called it—feasting his heart upon her, while his anger at circumstances which might tear her from him rose within him and swelled to a fierce denunciation of those who had been his ruin. And Patty shuddered at his coarseness and brutish anger, thinking they rose from an enthralling love of money, never imagining that she herself was the cause.

She came to fear him in those weeks, his ruthless scorn of his associates, his unrelenting anger and hate. And also she admired him for the very force of his emotion, and listened in wondering amazement to his schemes for winning back what he had lost, always for the purpose of punishing those who, he claimed, had betrayed him to his ruin. Then he would promise her money, unlimited money, always money, until she would close her ears and cry that she wanted to be poor, that she hated the very

sound of money, and never wished to see another penny. Then McVee would laugh shortly, a perfect bark of incredulous, challenging scorn, and stride up and down the room, pulling his beard.

She was little, dark-haired, with big, serious eyes, whose plaintiveness was rather contradicted by a stubborn chin and smiling mouth. There was a fineness about all her features and figure which might have made one think of her as delicate, fragile. But there was a gallantry in her carriage and a vigor in her movements which do not abide with weakness.

She had married McVee for his money, consciously, frankly, with no pretense of another motive. It had been a sacrifice to her family, and there had been bitter hours, bitter tears and more bitter memories. It seemed a little unfair in life, or destiny, to cheat her now in the sorry bargain she had driven. But life had always seemed to her unfair. She was watching the uncouth figure of her husband, counting with dreary monotony his heavy footsteps, when he suddenly turned to her and held out a small package done up in brown paper.

"The house is in your name," he said abruptly. "They can't rob me of that. Besides that, every penny I have is here."

Patty looked with curious interest at the paper bundle.

"There are fifty thousand dollars here," he added. "I want you to take it and keep it."

"I don't want it," she said angrily. "I've told you I don't want to see any money. The sight of it sickens me. I've heard nothing else for days and days."

"You're to keep it for me," said McVee, ignoring her protests. "And I don't want it stuck away in any corner."

"I shan't keep it, I tell you," she cried. "Why don't you put it in a bank?"

He looked down at her a moment, and smiled. "Why don't I put it in a bank?" he repeated. "A week

from today I am to be examined, and about one hundred persons will want to know what has become of that fifty thousand dollars. And I'm going to swear that I don't know. If it is found it goes as another sop to the creditors." He paused a moment as she took in his meaning, and then continued: "And it's all we have, I tell you. It's to be my start. And with it, in a very little time, I'm going to come back—back to see some old friends of mine and say a few things to them I want to say." He broke off at the sight of her expression. "And I'll have enough to give you everything you want again. Dresses and diamonds and horses—"

"But I don't want them," she cried. "I don't want any of those things. And you're acting dishonestly. It's like stealing to hide this money. I shan't keep it, and you mustn't keep it. It isn't honest."

"Honest!" interrupted McVee. He threw back his head and laughed insolently, brutally. "Do you, my dear, for one instant imagine anyone is honest when it comes to—the very heart of life? The people you know don't steal because it isn't respectable to have been in jail, and respectability is their idol. But if the fashion changed—how many would be honest? And even now, how many would be dishonest if they only dared? I, you know, never attempted to be in the fashion, and when it becomes necessary there is nothing I wouldn't dare."

She had turned white at this revelation, and her heart was beating fast in fear of him. But her eyes were steady and there was no tremor in her voice when she answered him.

"Have you ever heard of such a thing as honor?"

"Have I heard of it? I have had it dinned into my ears until every footstep pounded it! I have sickened upon it. It has been mouthed by every little self-swindling manlet who asked for more than I would offer. Honor! The sound of it is your very breath of life, but"—again rang out that bark of incredulous laughter, and Patty winced as at a blow—"but

I have never seen the thing in operation. It's just a word, Patty, unreal, foolish, impossible as a fairy tale. Haven't you found that out in all these years?"

"Have I acted," she asked slowly, "as if I had come to that conclusion?" He stopped his nervous stride and stared at the little figure.

"Have you ever put it to the test?" he said at last. "Have you ever desired anything more than respectability?"

She put up her hands before her face as if to ward off a blow.

"You must give it up," she said suddenly, as if it were emblematical of her own faith. "It is stealing; you must give it up."

"Give it up!" McVee laughed again. "I'd die before I'd give it up. And don't talk to me of stealing. You take that package and wear it. Keep it with you every minute of every day. And don't say a word to anyone. If you do—" He made a gesture and left the threat unfinished. "And least of all to Karnody. He mustn't have a glimmering of where it is."

"And suppose I do tell him?"

"If you do," said McVee slowly, "he'll throw up my case. And do you know what I would do? I'd ruin you," he said grimly. "I'd enter suit for divorce the next day, my dear, and name him as co-respondent."

He saw her blush hotly and then turn pale, while all the time she met his eyes bravely. And before she could reply, he turned upon his heel and strode out of the room.

It was the first time he had ever criticized her in any way, the first expression of doubt, of jealousy. She was so much amazed at first that she only wondered at the sudden charge. Then came a fear, which was quickly dissipated by her innocence. She did love Allen; she was not afraid of telling that to McVee herself. But she had been honest, honest always to McVee about her heart, honest in her actions as his wife. Now that he accused her, she became filled with anger at the injustice. She had borne much from him these last two weeks

from a certain sympathy, a kind of loyalty. She had tried to stand by him now that he was down. And her reward was this threat, this accusation . . . Still, he was down; she must in justice grant him that. And he was alone—no single friend had come to him—a solitary figure amid the ruins of his fortune. He had been kind to her; he had never before tonight crossed her desire, denied a wish. She would stand by him even now. And since honor was a word—perhaps to prove respectability was not her idol—she would keep the money, hide it, wear it.

And then? Where, then, did this reasoning lead her—since honor was just a word?

The room seemed reeking of him, his great, lumbering figure, his strident voice; it was suffocatingly hot. She went to the window and stepped out upon the porch—and in that moment traveled an infinite distance and entered another land.

The rose garden lay before her, bathed in the mellow, silvery light of a September moon. The soft wind rustled the leaves and brought to her the scent of roses. The dark, velvety blue of the sky was spangled with stars; the spray of the fountain fell with a silvery tinkle into the bronze basin. The witchery of the night laid its spell upon her. Old songs of love and romance sang with a throbbing lilt from forgotten corners of her memory. Old memories of other days lured her and pulled at her heart strings.

She turned suddenly and went back into the house. Then she came out again with her hat and veil. She stopped a moment and inhaled the fragrance of the garden, as a prisoner takes his first breath of liberty. She had long been a prisoner, and her husband—of all men—had just turned the key. Aimlessly, with no definite purpose other than to taste of freedom, she wandered forth. At the gate she stopped again and looked back over the enchanted garden. Then she smiled, kissed her hand to the roses and the

moon, and went out into the darkness of the street.

It had been Patty Carrall's fortune, or misfortune, to inspire in two men of the most opposite type and temperament a most uncommon love. Karnody and McVee were a perfect antithesis, yet the same woman filled both their lives and souls. Karnody had begun to love her when he was a boy in college. Serious, thoughtful, lonely, reared by a dreamy mother on the romance and idealism of the Old South, he brought to his passion for a schoolgirl the single-heartedness, the devotion, the faith which had won for his forefathers epaulets in soldiery and ermine at the bar. And Patty had loved him, in a thoughtless, volatile, schoolgirl way, with always an eye for other men, as became the prettiest girl in town. Her marriage to Adam McVee, the richest man in the State, would, under most conditions, have brought into Karnody's life some other interests—work, ambition, learning—even had his love remained. But he had just come to the bar, moved up to town and entered into a period of unlimited leisure. After the shock of the marriage had worn off came the drudgery of his profession—the rubbing shoulders with its failures and incompetents, the petty practices of its seamy side. Karnody lost interest in the law, and—he had never been ambitious—weakly enough, began nursing a hopeless love. His opportunities passed by unclutched, his talents—and they were considerable—lay barren, dormant. To life he presented an indifferent face. At thirty the man was beginning to be old. The lines about his mouth were deep; the corners of his eyes had wrinkled, and his temples were touched with gray.

His windows overlooked a pleasant garden prospect, bounded by the ivied walls of an old stone church. It had become his custom on summer evenings to watch the sun dip down behind the gable roof, while he, with a cigarette, or better still, a pipe, went off in dreams upon quite as far a journey. Here he would sit till far into the darkness,

making friends with the moon and many cold, bright stars. At this time the city was almost silent; the air was softer and he caught from the garden there below him a breath of roses. Upon this elusive, starlit fragrance there would come back to him the ghosts of happier hours, his high hopes and golden visions—which were but other names for Patty Carrall.

On such an evening came to him McVee, with news of his failure and impending bankruptcy, and put his case in Karnody's hands. Karnody wondered at his employment, had half a mind to refuse the litigation his brethren of the bar would have scrambled for, but finally bent his mind and energies upon the tangle of McVee's affairs. The most potent factor in bringing about this conclusion was the chance it promised of seeing Patty. She had played no less a part in McVee's decision to retain him. McVee knew in a rather indistinct and hazy way that Patty liked—if the emotion were no stronger—Allen Karnody. And because of her interest in him he had a fascination for McVee, one of the things she had touched and endowed with herself.

Tonight Karnody was late at his office. Next day the bankrupt was to be examined, and there were many matters to be prepared. He stopped at the club for supper, lingered over his coffee and cigar and reached his rooms long after dark. The key would not turn, and then he remembered having left the door unlocked. He opened the door, stepped upon the threshold, and stared in astonishment. In his own armchair was the dainty, graceful, and sleeping figure of Patty McVee.

He saw her closed eyes, and stood wondering what to do and why she had come. Patty was in trouble—and it must be serious—and she had, with her usual impulsiveness and recklessness, come to him.

As he stared at her, she opened her eyes and yawned, if the movement of her pretty mouth could be so described, then turned toward the door and saw Allen.

"At last!" she said with a smile. "It isn't often I am kept waiting, sir. Why don't you stay at home when I'm coming to see you?"

"If I had known!" He came to her and held out his hand. She let hers rest in his, making no effort to withdraw it until he stepped back.

"What is wrong? I hope it's nothing serious—and yet it must be to make you come here."

"Everything is wrong, Allen. Everything in the world."

"This sorry scheme of things! What can I remedy or try to remedy?"

"I want you to make everything right."

He smiled and shook his head. "If I only could, Patty!" he said wistfully. "How I would like to try my hand! Why did you come?"

"Because—my husband is a beast."

"What did he do tonight?"

"Oh, he didn't do anything particularly bad tonight. I am simply tired of him—I can't live with him—and I don't care what people say."

"Come," he said kindly, as if to a spoiled child. "You would never have come here tonight unless he had done something outrageous. What was it? You ought not to have come, you know."

"Why shouldn't I come here if I want to? Don't you want to see me, Allen?"

"Oh, Patty, you're not a child! You know the world."

"And I don't care for the world, not a snap of my fingers!" She illustrated with wonderfully pretty fingers.

"I don't pretend to understand you. But come to the point, if you can. You should be going home."

"Suppose I intend never to go back?"

"But you are—at least for tonight. I am going to take you." He smiled at her and nodded his head. She looked in his eyes for a full minute and then sighed.

"I think," she said slowly, "I'm rather sorry that I came. You remind me too much of Patty Carrall."

"A charming memory," he said.

She shook her head. "What an innocent little thing she was! Do you

remember that night—it was the first one—you kissed me? It was the first time a man had ever kissed me, Allen. And I cried myself to sleep—I'm sure I don't know whether from happiness or shame. I wonder how many men have kissed me since? Don't look so shocked, Allen! Anyone could see you've been a hermit. Oh," she sighed and looked away from him, "that was a long, long time ago!"

He made no answer for a time and in the silence the years swept back and opened up their harvest. "It was the last night of Commencement," he said, half to himself.

"Yes; you were going home, and we were very, very sad. Some boys were singing quite a little bit away—too far to catch the music. And you said: 'Let's stop and listen. It will be a memory of our last Commencement.' And do you remember what they sang?"

He shook his head, and she smiled and sang softly:

"I wish I had a barrel of rum
And sugar and spice in pounds,
The college bell to mix it in—"

They laughed together at the picture it brought back, and she continued.

"It spoiled the night for sentiment. After that everything was only humorous. And you were angry and couldn't remedy it. Had you but picked me up and kissed me, I think the song would have been forgotten."

"After all these years, why tell me that?"

"Perhaps," she laughed, "you'll know better next time."

"Patty!" he said staring away from her. "You are the most childish woman! Don't you know better than to play with fire?"

"As if a spark of your old affection were still alive!" she said scornfully. "No man was ever half so constant. But—I can start the fire again. Will you dare me?" She leaned over toward him with sparkling eyes.

"No," he said shortly.

"Do you remember," she began again with half-shut eyes, "those summer nights at home, so much softer and sweeter than summer nights are now,

when the moon came over the garden hedge—"

"No," he said hastily; "I swear I don't remember!"

"One night above all others," she continued, "when I had an armful of roses, and told you to choose the loveliest—"

There was silence for a moment, and Karnody went off into dreams again. "And I," he said slowly, half to himself, "chose you."

She nodded and added softly: "You called me—an armful of roses."

He started slightly, and frowned at her memories. And she leaned back in her chair and laughed, a silvery, caressing laughter. "Will you dare me?" she asked again.

"No," he said quickly.

"Afraid of a little thing like me?"

He made no answer but to shake his head and smile at her.

"Oh, Allen," she cried, and the laughter and badinage were gone, leaving a woman passionately earnest, "isn't it worth the having now? I'm older now, and sadder now, and the bloom is gone. But I'm Patty Carrall still. The years have slipped away and the world has cheated us. You have been no more miserable than I. Is there any reason why you should not love me?"

He stared at her wonderingly in a kind of pained amazement. She asked him why he did not love her, when his love for her—was himself. It held him up; it wrapped itself about him; it was at once his weakness and his strength. The mere thought of her could make his heart beat to a livelier measure; the memory of her eyes was a thing to lighten his feet. He loved her smallest finger tip better than all the joys of living. It seemed to him that should he open his mouth to speak his love must fly from his lips. He looked away from her again, threw back his shoulders, as if assuming some heavy burden, and then answered her question.

"There is the best of reasons," he said at last.

"What is it?" she demanded.

"Honor?" He bowed his head.

"My husband told me no later than

tonight that honor was but an undiscovered element, a superstition he would have us all discard."

"Would you have me discard it?" he asked with some bitterness. "It is the only thing left me, Patty."

"An evil heritage that keeps you from me!" she cried.

He left her side and went to his window, which overlooked the garden. The night had sped; the moon was sinking, and the silence lay thick upon the streets. She was the most beautiful woman in the world, the loveliest, tonight—the loneliest. She had come to him unasked, unsought. Before him stretched the long, long years of manhood and the wide, wide world. Between them stood—a superstition, a shadow of custom . . . His heritage, she had rightly named it. He looked again to the darkened sky, the cold and clear uplifting stars. His heritage—evil or good, he would be loyal to his own.

He turned and faced her, his eyes brightened by decision, but her eagerness for his answer read in them the light of love.

"Patty," he said at last, and she started toward him, "you must be going."

She drew back a step, faltered, and then said haltingly, "I don't want to go back—tonight."

He threw out his hand in a laughing gesture. "Was there ever so unreasonable a woman?" he said. "You know you must go back. I hope no one saw you come."

"And if they did?" she said. "I don't care if they did!"

"Yes, you do care," he said. "You *must* care . . ."

"Ah, but I don't, Allen, and that's the pity of it! I care for nothing now but you."

"Listen," he said gently, going to her. "I have loved you all my life. Because of it I could not take you—as you are. The things I love you for, your hands, your gestures, your voice and your eyes, would shame me by their beauty; each lovely bit of you would stab me—cry aloud my dishonor. My

dear, I've done a deal of thinking upon this queer existence we must go through with, and at the last the best anyone of us can do is to be faithful to that thing one loves the best—"

"Yes, yes," she interrupted eagerly; "therefore you must be faithful to me."

"No—" he began, when with a warning gesture she continued:

"Don't you see that if you deny me now it is because you do not love me best? Do you love honor better? Do you love the safety and contentment of the world's approval? Ah! I'm sick—so heartsick, Allen, of the world and worldly things! I want you—that you which long ago called forth the best of me. I'm coming to you. I am coming back to my noblest self. Take me away, far away—from the past five years of living!"

"Patty, we can never get away from those five years."

"Are you afraid?" she asked a little scornfully. "Do you not dare the trial? Allen, you will, I know you will—because—you love me."

"I love you far too much."

She was silent a moment, eying him all the while very steadfastly. Then she threw back her head and answered: "You are a coward—that's what you are, Allen Karnody!"

"I am—afraid," he said gravely.

"It is not honor—of which you make such brave parade—that holds you. It is your vanity, your weakness. You talk of faithfulness and

love. You're acting attitudes. You're nursing your foolish sentimentality and sending me back to a husband who is a thief, a bully and a blackguard. But he is a man, Allen Karnody, a man!" She stood before him, rigid, reckless, panting after her torrent of anger. Karnody had not flinched, had not moved an eyelid during her tirade. When she had done he waited a moment and then spoke to her.

"Had you not best be going home?"

"Home!" she cried bitterly, and the word with its tremendous meaning left her on the brink of tears. "Yes, I shall go, and I'll tell him all that I've done and all I have said. And I shall know through all his oaths and curses—perhaps his blows—that he is a man! Some day, as God lives, I believe I shall love him because of that knowledge. Oh! Oh!" She burst into hysterical sobbing, snatched up her gloves and ran blindly out of his rooms and down the stair. He heard the door of the cab slam as she entered, and then the *clop, clop* of the horse's feet.

He took up again his outlook at the window, and watched the marching stars until the faint gray light of dawn. His life marched by in retrospect before him—a thing to wonder at and pity. It was a vigil, bitterly remembered, bitterly undergone. Yet it was not his wasted opportunities nor buried talents which so sharply moved him. The lonely solace of his dreams was gone.



THE KISS

By ADELE DURAND HOLT

UPON her mouth it lay,
Her red lips blushing thro' it.
A pouf—and it had blown away!
I simply *had* to do it.

JUST PERTENDIN'

By MINNIE BARBOUR ADAMS

"O H, maw, poor, poor maw!" someone moaned as I was comin' up the stairs. There was a dandy red carpet on 'em, so I didn't make no noise; and before I got to the top they had said it again, and bust right out cryin' at the end.

Feeling all worked up, myself, it sounded so pitiful there in the dark, I felt my way along to the little jog in the hall, and there found Birdie Todd, the sassy little spitfire that waits on the table, rocking back and forth on the woodbox and sobbing as though her heart would break.

I didn't exactly know what to do, never having seen a girl cry before; so, while I stood there wondering and sweating like a pitcher of ice water on a hot day, she broke out again:

"Oh, dearest maw! Must I give you up for the want of a few dollars?"

The arc light on the corner flared up just then, and she saw me and gave a little squeal.

"Oh—oh, dear! Is it you, Mr. Buxton?" she said, trying to act as though nothing was the matter. "Lovely night, isn't it?"

"Fine. But what are you cryin' about?" I blurted out, mighty brave in the dim light.

"Oh, no-noth-ing," she said, with a catch in her breath.

"Come, now, no fooling," I said, pushing her back on the box and sitting down beside her. "I heard you say something about your maw."

"Did you hear me?" she asked. "I should have been more careful; but, oh, Mr. Buxton—when the heart is full—bursting—" She began to cry again; and, not knowing what to do, I

swallowed hard and cracked my joints. I didn't dare to put my arm around her like they do in books, though I'd 'a' liked to.

"Sick?" I asked, after a while.

"Who?" she said, and took her hands away from her face and stopped rocking.

"Your maw."

"No, but she's goin' to be," she sniffed. "Doc says it's all up with her if she ain't operated on inside of a week."

"What's she got?"

"Hip-hip—"

"—hurrah?" I said before I thought, and was mad enough to bite my tongue out; but Birdie only giggled.

"Hipo—condriac, I think they call it," she went on. "Anyway, she's got to have it cut out, and—and that's what I was crying for."

"Scared to have it done?"

"Scared not to!" she snapped out, and then plumped her face down in her hands again.

"Why—what—" I began.

"Oh, don't you see?" she said, through her fingers. "We can't. We haven't got the price!"

"Oh!"

I thought for a spell, she whimperin' and rocking back and forth beside me in the dark. I got awful big wages, eighteen dollars a week, but I couldn't seem to hang onto it for some reason. I'd paid five to Mrs. Snoddy that night for board, and she had borrowed three off of me to help out with the rent, and Dave Pringle had got two for some foolishness.

"How much is it goin' to cost?" I asked.

She didn't answer for some time, but seemed to be counting up something on her fingers.

"Doc says he'll do it for twenty-five dollars, seein' we're old friends," she said at last, "and we can give him five a week till it's all paid."

I chirked up at that, for I had supposed from what I'd read that it would be a hundred or two.

"Oh, that's easy," I said, taking out my wallet. "Here's six; and tell Doc I'll see to the rest, and with the other dollar you can get her some candy and popcorn to pass the time with after she's had it cut out."

"Oh, Mr. Buxton!" she said, grabbing my hands and squeezin' 'em. "You've lifted such a load from my heart!" and she kissed 'em.

"Look out! You're puttin' one on mine," I stuttered, feelin' awful happy.

"Sir?" she asked, lookin' puzzled.

"Nothing; only if I can do anything else to help you out, just let me know."

"I will. And, Mr. Buxton—"

"Yes?"

"Don't mention it to anybody. Mrs. Snoddy is the swe-e-test thing—almost like a mother to me, though she'd scratch my eyes out for thinkin' she was old enough to be it." She laughed, and then added:

"But she has no patience with sorrows or heartaches, and it would be as much as my place was worth to look sad; and, of course, I don't want the others to know. Now, you are different; so tender, so sympathetic—" She looked up at me, her eyes shining through the tears, and I know I'd 'a' done something rash if, just then, we hadn't heard the front door open and someone coming upstairs.

Birdie whispered good night and scuttled down the hall, and I went to bed.

The next day she was as gay and full of the Old Scratch as ever, and it beat me how she could do it till she gave me a sad, knowing look, and sighed; then I remembered what she had said about Mrs. Snoddy.

At supper, a dude that had only come that day, and wasn't onto the

ropes yet, said something soft to her, and we all just laid back in our chairs to watch her fix him. She did it so quick and so thorough that he choked and spluttered; an', Mrs. Snoddy passin' him the cake just then, he took the whole plate and handed his back to her.

While we were still laughin' fit to bust, Birdie come in with the mail, lookin' as innocent as you please; and, walkin' clear around the long table, give me a letter and sighed again. Then they all begun to guy me about it bein' from my girl, during which the dude slid out.

It wasn't, for I didn't have none; but it was from Lawyer Hoskins, sayin' the farm was sold and the inclosed three hundred was my share, seein' which, for the cheque fell out on the table in plain sight, they got mighty sober; and I could see that every mother's son of 'em was tryin' to figure out some way of gettin' a slice of it.

Sure enough, right after supper Mrs. Snoddy give me that kitteny smile of hers and asked would I walk into the parlor, she wanted to speak to me; while the others, instead of hikin' right out for town like they always did, stood around, coughin' and lookin' glum.

"Oh, dear Buxie!" Mrs. Snoddy said, layin' her pudgy fingers on my arm and lookin' up at me soft and mushy. She had always called me that when we was alone, but, somehow, tonight, it made me gag. "Kirk sent me the *awfulest* bill for dry goods to-day. I didn't know it was so big, and I just cried 'n cried 'n—" She began to pucker and crane her neck just like an old hen does when she's lookin' for a place to roost, which, in this case, I took to be my shoulder, so I backed off.

"'N I just thought—" she went on, claspin' her hands and follerin'.

I never knew what she thought, for at that minute the hall floor began to groan and creak.

"Drat her!" Mrs. Snoddy said, uglier than I ever saw her, and yanked open the door.

"What do you want?" she snapped.

Annie, the three-hundred-pound cook, didn't answer, but looked right past her to where I was sweatin' and twiddlin' my fingers.

"A note for you, Mr. Buxton," she said, winkin' with her good eye, and handin' me a scrap of paper. "Immejut!" she warned, and waddled off again.

"Oh, Mr. Buxton," I read, "come to me quick in the summer house. I'll die—" It broke off right there, as though she was; and, thinkin' that cuttin' out her maw's hip-hip-hurrah business had likely killed her and she needed comfort, I muttered something about seein' a man uptown and brushed past Mrs. Snoddy, who was lookin' as though she'd like to bite either me or the cook. I started out through the kitchen, we often goin' that way if we was in a hurry to get uptown, it cuttin' off nearly a block.

"Oh, say, Buxton, my boy!" Pringle hollered, and started after me, as did also Si and Ben; but I waved 'em back, sayin' I was in an awful hurry an' would meet 'em in the Square in an hour or two.

Well, I found Birdie in the summer house in the vacant lot across the alley, and she wasn't cryin', just twistin' her hands and gaspin', with her pretty face lookin' as though something awful had happened.

"Your maw?" I asked, takin' the poor, tremblin' hands and squeezin' 'em hard, never rememberin' that I was bashful.

"No, no! It's poor Clarence Archibald—"

"Clarence, how much?" I asked, thinkin' it might be one of her durned beaus.

"Clarence Archibald, my little brother; the one that looks like me!"

"What ails *him*?"

"Diphthery!" she cried, hangin' onto me as though she was drownin'. "Percival Dillingham, the next one, just come to the kitchen door and told me, and then—why, then I wrote that note to you, thinkin' that if anyone in this world could comfort me, it was you."

If she'd 'a' wanted me to be really sorry she shouldn't 'a' looked at me that a-way out of her soft, brown eyes, for I felt like shoutin' and crackin' my heels together; but I managed to say that it was mighty bad, poor Percival Dillbury havin' diphthery, and his maw away in the hospital.

"Of course grandpa and Auntie Sue will take care of him," she explained. "They and the rest of the children are quarantined there with him. But, oh, Mr. Buxton, how can I endure it? To go on waitin' and smilin' when he's so sick; maybe callin' for dear sister Birdie. And—and how are they goin' to live?" The last was only a whisper, but I heard it, bein' pretty close by that time.

"Live? Afraid the rest'll die with it?"

"No. But, you see, mamma and Auntie Sue did dressmaking, and now that that is stopped—with only my three dollars—" I thought she edged up a little closer, but maybe it was me; I can't rightly be sure of anything about that time.

"Is that all they've got to live on, Birdie?" I asked. "And for medicine and doctorin'?"

"All!" she whispered; and then—oh, Lord, I don't know what happened exactly, but I was tellin' her all about the three hundred which had come as a God-send just when we—oh, I said *we* as big as life, and she only smiled and patted my arm—just when we needed it so all fired bad.

I felt years older, and happier than I'd ever been in my life when I went downtown a few minutes later, though Birdie hadn't said or done a single endurin' thing—except with her eyes—to make me so; and when each of the boys waylaid me during the evening and tried to beg or borrow, or, as usual, spoke of goin' to a show or something, knowing I'd pay, I turned 'em all down and went home, climbin' up on the shed roof and gettin' in the window to escape Mrs. Snoddy, who was waitin' up for me on the front porch.

I made up my mind that night that I was a-goin' to cut out lendin' and

riotous living, and try to save. I suppose, never having a penny of my own for so many years was what made 'em leak through my fingers like quicksilver when I did get 'em; and never seein' nothin' or nobody but the scatterin' neighbors once in a long while and the camp meeting back on the ridge once a year was what made me so all fired hot after the sinful pleasures of the world when I got the chanst.

Aunt Sabina and Uncle Sam had took me when I was weak and helpless, and when they got in the same fix I felt the call plain to care for them till they should be gathered to Abraham's bosom. Of course I won't say that sometimes I didn't think he was taking a mighty long time about it, they being a handful along toward the last, what with the stock and the thirty acres of adamant set up on one end for all the world like a wedge of dried out gingerbread. But he did it six months before; and, leavin' everything to Cousin Emmeline, who was at the funeral, and Lawyer Hoskins, I lit out for town, where I got a job that needed more strength than brains, but paid me good. Why, the first time I stood staring at the eighteen dollars in my hand it seemed like a fortune, and I thought I could buy half of the town with it; but what with treatin' the boys, and their borrowin', and gettin' a few things for myself, I didn't have a cent left by Monday night; and it had been just that way ever since.

Clarence Archibald died—yes, sir, in spite of all the money I turned in for nursin' and doctorin', the poor little chap give up the fourth day, and I cried harder'n Birdie, for thinkin' so much about him and knowin' he looked like her had made me feel as though he was a relation, even most as though he was a son.

Percy Dillbury was down, too, and things looked pretty black; but, right through it all Birdie laughed and joked and pestered the life most out of the dude till he never knew what he was eatin'; only her sad eyes and sighs tellin' me what she was sufferin'.

I saw her every evening for a few

minutes over in the summer house, and she told me how things were comin' on, and I give her the money to keep things a-goin'. I'd offered it all to her at the start, but she wouldn't take it that way, sayin' she wanted me to know what each cent was spent for. Of course she and maw—if she lived, poor soul!—and Auntie Sue would pay it all back some time; but I didn't let her get any further than that. I didn't want to be paid back—in money, at least. It would 'a' seemed like your sweetheart bein' in debt to you for all the good times you'd given her, or bein' paid for gettin' religion.

I never knew before that a funeral cost so much; that is, a stylish one. Why, it took almost twice as much to round off that little chap as it did for aunt and uncle both, though of course Strippel had thrown off some on account of there being two at a time. Birdie would have nothing but the best, and it did seem to me—though you bet I didn't tell her so—that as long as it had to be private, not even she or her maw being able to attend, or none of the neighbors, on account of the quarantine, that cheaper fixin's might have done; but, no, siree! White velvet coffin, and hearse, and bushels of flowers, and mournin' for the family, though she didn't put it on on account of Mrs. Snoddy, and an expensive buryin' lot; all of which made the three hundred look mighty sick and shriveled.

I would 'a' gone and looked on at a distance, but I couldn't get off, no more than could Birdie. Then I said we'd go out to the buryin' ground on the trolley cars some Sunday, but she screeched out that she could not bear to gaze on poor little Clarence Archibald's grave; it would break her heart, so I said no more about it.

The weather turned cold and stormy about that time, and Percy Dill—dill—pickle bein' up and around, though not out yet, she fell to worryin' about their clothes. Grandpa's rheumatiz was worse and he must have some thick underwear and a new chest protector; Auntie Sue, poor Auntie Sue, on whom all the burdens fell—I cracked my

joints twice around, but said nothing—must have a lot of fol-de-rols to keep her up to the mark; and all the five young 'uns must have new shoes and coats and things to keep 'em warm when they went back to school.

I'd been bankin' on a tailor-made suit, for I was so tarnal big the hand-me-downs didn't fit any too good; but I give it up and plugged along with the old one. One night when they'd all gone to a show, Annie said if I'd go to bed or wrap up in a quilt, she'd iron it for me; and Birdie darned up the pockets and tightened the buttons on one while Annie was at the other.

Birdie had always had a lot of fellows hangin' around, and had always had 'em tumblin' over each other to take her to shows and dances; but now she give 'em all the cold shoulder, sayin' she was tired of goin', and of them, too, and had rather stay to home. Of course I knew the reason why; a breakin' heart don't hanker after no foolish pleasures. The boys, too, were not quite so keen on me since I'd stopped payin' their way to every fool thing, and lendin'—giving, rather, for they never paid it back—so I got into the habit of comin' home at half past eight, when I left the business college where I was takin' a course in figurin' and grammar, I being a little shy along those lines.

The folks was always gone by that time, for Mrs. Snoddy had given me up as a bad job and had hooked onto Dave, who was willin'; and they gadded all the time. Most of the nights was cold and rainy, and I tell you the dining room looked mighty cheerful with a fire snapping and crackling, the hanging lamp, with its red shade, making me think of moonlight; and, settin' right beneath it, piecin' quilt blocks or sewin' on clothes for herself, was Birdie, the red light makin' her look like an angel. Out in the kitchen you could see Annie—you couldn't see anything else if you looked that way—her feet in the oven, readin' dime novels and chewin' gum. My, but it did seem powerful homelike and cozy to a man that had been raised in a kitchen

on a tallow dip and a couple of old folks.

We'd talk about our family for a spell, and figure out what my next week's wages must go for, and then I'd read out of a magazine to her, a-guessin' at the big words which she didn't know no better than I how to pronounce. Oh, it was just heavenly! I didn't know there was anything like it on earth; and I began to have dreams.

She didn't help 'em along a bit, not even lookin' at me if she could help it, she had got so mighty shy; but when she did—oh, Lord! I didn't sleep all night; just sizzled and froze, turn about, and had visions.

Of course she wouldn't have me. A great, big ornery chump like me was a dummed fool to think a cunning little humming bird like her would look twice at him. I had only been "an instrument of the Lord in the time of need," as uncle used to say three times a day in his blessing; but, just the same, when the days began to get longer and the grass began to show green in the sheltered corners, I couldn't help lookin' at every tidy little cottage I passed, and thinkin'—and wishin'.

"There's crape on Clark's door, so I had to go clear on over to Barker's for the butter," Birdie said one night as she hurried in with it in one hand and a plate of hot biscuits in the other.

"So he's gone at last," said Ben. "Poor Jimmie Clark!"

"Snap for somebody that's got a little money," Dave put in. "Finest location in the suburbs, to my notion; town's growin' this way fast."

"What'll old man Sanders do now, I wonder?" Si asked. "He's been in that store since it was only a little crossroads grocery."

"Stay right on if the fellow that buys it has any sense," Dave said; and then they went to talkin' of something else.

Birdie had been fussin' around the table during the talk, and now, as she started for the kitchen, she give me the funniest look, and the little scowling nod toward the summer house that meant she wanted to see me there as soon as possible.

What on earth ailed her? Her cheeks was fiery red and her eyes was shining like stars, and she seemed awful worked up. Was her maw dead, or some of the rest of 'em sick? Lord! What would we do? I didn't feel that we could stand another spell of it right away.

I suddenly found that my appetite had gone back on me, so I slid out over to the summer house, where I set and worried like the nation till Birdie came hurryin' in, breathin' hard.

She grabbed hold of the lapels of my coat and looked up at me awful strange, a-sayin', "Oh, Joe! Oh, Joe!" till I got scared.

"Which one is it this time?" I asked, tryin' to speak patient; "or is it all of 'em?" I felt, somehow, as though I couldn't tackle a catchin' disease or a buryin' for a spell.

"None of 'em, Joe," she said, laughin' hysterical and givin' me a little shake—or tryin' to. "The grocery store, Joe; you know you've always said—" Her lips began to quiver and her eyes to fill up; and before I knew it she was sobbing "Grocery store! Grocery store!" on my vest, and I was sayin', "There, honey love, don't cry." Yes, siree, sayin' it just like that, and huggin' her like mad!

I had talked grocery store, or something like it, all winter, for I was so gosh blamed tired of sloppin' around in the mud, which I had all my life, and the idea of goin' dressed up and havin' time to read and go to night school looked mighty good to me.

"But, don't you see?" she said, drawin' back and laughin' through her tears; "Clark's store, Joe! She wants to sell right off so she can go to her maw."

"I see, dearie," I said, laughin' too, though I didn't know why; "but I've only got forty-five cents, 'n—"

"You've—got—just—six—hundred—dollars, Joe Buxton," she said, drawin' back still further and speakin' very slow, her cheeks gettin' pale and puckery.

I only stared, and she reached up a shaking little hand and touched my cheek.

"Six hundred dollars, Joe! I saved it all for you; it's all in the bank."

"But—but—your maw?" I stut-tered.

"Died when I was a baby."

"And—and the kids?"

"There ain't no kids."

"And grandpa and Auntie Sue?" I whispered, gettin' weak in the knees.

"I never had none," she said, hangin' onto me as I kinder staggered.

"Then what—" I began.

"Oh, Joe! You ain't mad at me, are you?" she said, beginnin' to whimper again. "Don't you see? You were so—so green, and the boys were coaxin' your money away from you so, 'n—'n—"

I couldn't stand up no longer, but just slumped onto the bench, takin' her with me.

"No, I ain't mad, you little precious! Go on," I managed to say.

"Annie and I thought it a shame, so—so I pertended—just pertended, Joe."

"Birdie," I whispered, my cheek against her hair and my arm around her close; "say, Birdie—" I could scarcely breathe now, my heart was jumpin' so.

"Wh—what, Joe?" she whispered back.

Then—oh, Lord! I don't know how I did it—I just turned her pretty curly head around and kissed her on the mouth, and said:

"This ain't pertendin', is it, Birdie?"

She didn't answer for a spell; and then, at last, so low that I could hardly hear it, she said:

"You bet it ain't, Joe!"



THE BALLAD OF FOUR KISSES

By ARCHIBALD SULLIVAN

"I HAVE been kissed by a King," she said,
 "Who with his court flashed by,
 And a Knight who came like a golden flower
 Out of the evening sky,
By a Fisher Lad as he dragged his net
 From the arms of the summer sea,
By a Merman out of the coral caves
 Who called from the rocks to me.

"And the King he kissed with a wine-sweet mouth
 Till the world was a ring of musk,
And the Knight's mad kiss made a crimson star
 Fall through the shadowed dusk,
And the Fisher Lad's was a kiss of sea,
 Cool on my lips as snow,
And the Merman's kiss was a silver thread
 That lured me down below.

"I have been kissed by a Ghost," she said,
 "When the moon hung free of clouds,
And the dead peered out at the autumn stars
 Through the rents in their tattered shrouds,
And it seemed that the King and the Fisher Lad
 And the Knight and the Merman free
Had followed close and were once again
 Kissing the mouth of me.

"And now I may never pass me by
 The place where the dead are laid,
But the voices of four who have kissed my lips
 Call from the dusky glade.
And I knew the King and the Fisher Lad,
 The Knight and the Merman tall,
But who is this who is not of them,
 Yet kisses like them all?"

THE INCONVENIENCES OF SPIRITUALISM

By BEATRIX DEMAREST LLOYD

SPIRITUALISM is like the skeleton in the closet. It has always been there and for generations people have agreed to ignore it. But in this new era of publicity, with an army of men and women pandering to the long checked craving of the world to know more than they ought about people they don't know at all, even the poor old rattlebones has been dragged from retirement.

There is one awful thing to consider before one begins to experiment with this psychic force that is at present fashionable. There is something unnatural and uncanny about a thing that has a beginning and no ending. Lovers will hotly dispute this—those, I mean, who are not convinced that they knew and loved before the eozoic mud—but for the majority—or is it the minority?—of mankind to face such a problem is quite as baffling as being told that the parts are greater than the whole. The trouble with perpetual motion was that it had to be invented, and there lay the greatest Irish bull that ever went down four feet first. The same trouble holds good in Spiritualism, in one sense. And the sovereign rule is, "Don't."

A few intimate friends get together and hold hands. To the scoffer that will seem too many. But let us ignore him. They have vaguely heard about table rappings and hands appearing from the everywhere into the here, and they laugh and think it's funny; and just because it is such a joke and the lights are out and Mrs. Perkins is sit-

ting next to Mr. Thompson, they decide to try it. They do. They sit in absolute silence invoking trouble.

Now it seems, parenthetically, to a totally unbiased observer, that when folks have so little trouble in this world that they must seek it in the nebulous atmosphere about them, they would better let sleeping spirits lie, and not try to do it themselves. This last is purely smart and has nothing to do with the matter in hand. Hand in hand, as we left them. For these people don't lie, bless you. It would be better for them if they did.

Well, there they are. An hour ago they were normal, comfortable, happy people, with just enough recklessness in their assurance to do this foolish thing. What happiness? Why, nothing very much—just then. If Mr. Thompson holds Mrs. Perkins's hand very lightly, that is only to be sure that in a spirit of mischief she won't rap the table with her bracelet and set the taut nerves of the company quivering.

But the odd part about this spirit world is that it is very bashful, and that it takes one evening after another—well, Mrs. Perkins is interested in the occult—of hand holding to get them to begin. And there lies—it's a horrid word—all the trouble.

These adventuresome idiots meet together night after night and hold hands. Suddenly the table moves. And, quite between writer and reader, why not? It begins by gentle tremors, like those of a mild electric current. Everybody feels it. They all whisper together.

And why one person should ask, "Didn't you hear a knock?" and another should answer, "Darling!" is beyond the ken of the "control."

This is the beginning. It goes on from this to violence. People are thrown about the room, cuffed on the head, chairs whipped from under them, letters thrown in their faces, their jewels taken and flung down on the table, their hair pulled and sometimes—woe to the yards of puffs!—taken down, and the pins distributed as souvenirs.

This, we repeat, is the beginning. It can't be said that any of the persons present in the circle would choose that sort of abuse, helpless to retaliate. Yet they do choose it, and get quite hysterically elated when a giant hand takes one bodily from the room and deposits the victim on the milk bottles in the area-way.

It seems an odd taste. But they continue to count its insults. Bells are rung all over the house; the furniture strolls about like nursery maids in the park; windows are opened and shut; fires are put out; pictures are removed from the walls and laid in the fireplaces—quite justly, perhaps; books are taken from the case and the pages turned over slowly under the noses of the circle.

The circle seems to enjoy it. When one of them is lifted to the sideboard and held there against their combined forces, they are pleased. If a large Daghestan rug is brought through seven locked doors and spread under their table without its being moved, they are delighted.

Now why is that?

But the awful part is yet to come. They continue this hand-holding business. They buy a planchette board and it tells them that P. J. C. is at this moment setting fire to a house in New Brunswick. That important information digested, they ask it to produce a rose. There is a sound of rushing wings and a dozen roses are thrown into the room.

And here is the curious side of it. The most matter-of-fact and practical nation in the world, we have never made use of the "control." Why not

ask it to throw a thousand shares of Standard Oil, or a dividend on Pennsylvania? Not at all. In the tremor of the moment, we ask it to bring the latchkey or the rubbers under the divan in the hall. And we are tickled to death when it does! Good heavens, Bridget would get them for you without clouting you on the head first—unless she belonged to the union. But there is no need hoping that people will ask sensible service from boggarts, when they don't of traction companies and telephone lines. I have heard lots of people complain that spirits can't be of any value, because they do such trivial things. But aren't they asked to? Did you ever hear of a person requesting at a seance to have the streets cleaned or the tariff revised? No, they ask him what Brother Jim died of, and the poor etheric force wastes its whole energy in saying "Mince pie"—seventy-four raps by count—and goes back into the pellucid blue. They knew all the time, and the family doctor who told them charged them five dollars a visit. Thus is commercialism rampant.

Now the crisis arrives. The "control" has been a shy little mother's darling up to this, and has appeared only when asked for and that reluctantly. Little by little it has grown stronger. The very word itself is ominous. Fancy the director in a bank holding the slender digits of two fair women in his fat gold-smeared paws, and consenting like a chipmunk to let the "control" pass him!

But he does. Why does a chicken cross the road? And the big mistake is over—but not finished.

Fancy yourself a poor, bored spirit, wandering about with no circle of hand pressing friends to welcome you. If you ever were a shoe drummer perhaps you can. Rutherford, New Jersey, on Sunday, at seven, with five hours to wait—that's it. Well, then, imagine yourself suddenly dragged in—not just invited, but commanded, like a royal invitation, and allowed at last to hit someone good and much, to throw things and put your fingers on the bottom. In old days, this latter may have

done much for you; now, it will only give you the satisfaction of seeing the butler appear with another magnum. It seems hard and it certainly is not soft.

Then, fancying yourself all that, a life sentence eluded, with a million in your pocket and the Haymarket just over the way—what would you do? Just what P. J. C.'s friend proceeds to do.

Hell may be a long way down, but so many people have helped to raise it that it must, in our opinion, now lie a little above the Subway.

It has begun. Mrs. Perkins lives in an apartment, and at present—because of the servant in the house—for a day or so is doing her own work. She is going downtown to buy a hat. It is peanuts to premiums that she comes home late. Wherefore she leaves the place in apple pie order—including the pie, which can be reheated later. She comes home to find Perkins standing like Hannibal on the ruins of Carthage.

The curtains have been torn down; the stew has been emptied from the fireless cooker onto the janitor, who will claim damages; the rugs have been neatly placed in the tubs and the telephone and electric wires have been cut.

All the doors have been locked all

day. It is as plain as the bare floor of the flat. The released "control" has been working with that superfluous energy that so distinguishes him.

It is not much better in the Thompson household, or in any of the others of that psychic circle. They have got their hands together and this is the result. Ossa piled on Pelion is a mere four-story house compared to this Singer Building of destruction.

Why do spirits never turn their attention the other way? Why could not one come home and find the books put away, the socks darned, the letters answered and the milkman paid? When will it end? Who knows? Volumes of testimony have been written, revised and edited, and the general consensus of opinion is that a table upset is the least to be expected.

Yet Mrs. Perkins and Mr. Thompson and the other will put their shattered Penates together and don their best clothes and go to the circle's meeting to hold hands, and have their chairs whipped from under them, their puffs distributed for souvenirs, their rings taken off and themselves thrown violently about the room.

It seems a quaint notion of pleasure, does it not?



THE PRUDE

By THOMAS GRANT SPRINGER

THE Hollyhocks stand in a stiff, prim row,
 Lining the garden walk;
 The Bachelor Buttons behind them grow,
 But high on their stalks the Hollyhocks blow,
 Nor look behind them because they know
 How folks are inclined to talk.
 So the Bachelor Button swings to and fro,
 Ignored by the Hollyhock.

YOU can seldom borrow money from the man who has his price.

WOOING A WIFE

By HROLF WISBY

ERIK DROST surrendered to the embrace of his favorite chair—a comfortable, luxurious piece such as only artists make for an artist's fancy.

The mysterious smile, for which he was not unduly noted, brightened a face that destiny, not nature, had stamped with the hallmark of unutterable melancholy. The smile was justified, for had he not contrived a most extraordinary appointment? Certainly it had every element of a mischievous riddle. Before he realized it he was gloating over its possibilities, and, by a curious association of ideas, transplanting it to the Montmartre studio of his Paris days to test the nimble wits of Bohemian fellow workers with its magic.

"*Mes enfants chéris*"—thus he would cut into the smoke and the brawl—"I am this evening to meet a woman who is neither sweetheart, friend nor foe, to whom I am not related and with whom I have no business; a woman who is closer to me, though a stranger, than anyone else could be; who may be all love, or all hate, I know not which. Not a pupil of mine, understand, though she probably did learn the great, revealing lesson of life from me before she could possibly experience its ups and downs by actual living; nor a model, although I am not sure but that she has inspired an inner vision, a symbol of womanly worth; not a patron seeking perpetuation in marble or bronze, and still she has given me a greater task than my most liberal client. The memory of her will outlive, and maybe outshine, my best

efforts in clay. Now, then, messieurs, who—where is the woman?"

Thus he would speak, he fancied. "*Où est la femme?*" he repeated in a whisper, and his stare became blank and empty; even he did not know. He glanced about the ornate little studio draped pensively with mellow, mysterious stuffs, the same little studio of a former and more frugal day in the very tower of the mighty skyscraper. From the center window the view unfurled stately Fifth Avenue lifting her prim skirts in crossing Broadway, and looking on, close by, Madison Square drawn aside in protest like an ancient dame of quieter days, thoroughly aloof in shady seclusion from the modern madness and privately concerned over her patchy green and asthmatic fountain.

His eye sought not these things so much as a certain section of the asphalt, a spot where nothing remained to remind a rushing and callous age of what had once stood there—as if the architectural consciousness of the great metropolis had not found its mothering impulse right there under the sweep of a memorial pile great not merely in greatness of name!

"The vulgarians still rule," he muttered. He could not help dropping back, in view of this disrespect, to former days when he used to square up among fellow workers on that pile of scaffolding and plaster, his comrades succumbing one by one, stricken by the blast of a raging Manhattan hot weather wave. Eventually, the choice had thinned down to him as the only available hand to model the sailor and

the blacksmith, and he accredited himself beyond the highest hopes of his friends, for of hope he had but little left himself then. Delving away in the great arch under the lash of a brutal sun, the young Norse sculptor made his reputation. In the enthusiasm of sudden success he had suddenly married none the less enthusiastically, setting at naught the match-making proclivities of his relatives across the seas.

Once more he trod Gotham stone and curb after years spent not innocently abroad; once more he found himself upon the scene of early hardships, only now his fame was fixed like the stars; once more he found himself "reinstated" by precise relations more on account of his having obtained a divorce than by his earning the *medaille d'or*. Everybody had been against him when he was poor and struggling, that was certain, but fortune had only to laurel his brow when the indifferent hands of hypocrites came forward with proffers of friendship because it was no longer needed. Once more the inexhaustible theme of woman began to surge through his mind—recurring always to a certain one—only now he was a man of mark with a year-old divorce paper in his pocket and wiser, much wiser, than love allows.

Three long, stubborn years he had been hankering for that paper, only to care less and less for it since the day he obtained it. He had had time to let thoughts come to him unbidden—and had experienced the superior satisfaction of it—rather than do his musing purposely. He had seen other women in other lands, but he had found none able to smuggle into the crevices of his saddened soul, none with the possibilities for intuitive understanding like his discarded wife. Had it not been that she was consumed by jealousy, her otherwise wonderful fitness would have held him a lovelorn captive. It was not long before this temper, goaded into perfect mania, had made it impossible for him to hire models at any price, or mingle with fellow artists, and so the bonds had broken between two

mortals capitally well adapted, barring this cancer, to each other.

Erik Drost was a reasonable man, which is a deal to say of an artist. He combined plain common sense in most surprising doses with a lofty, if not mystic, mentality. His work revealed it not infrequently; his manner of doing and talking betrayed him; what he achieved, or failed at, somehow bore the mark of it. Since his release he had been reviewing his marital past over and over again, not so much to clear his conscience, as a less intrepid soul might, but actually to find fault with himself. Being fearlessly introspective he was always going over it.

The first time he caught her—how well he remembered the sense of shame that incensed him almost to the point of striking as he watched her, through half-shut lids, tiptoe from their mutual bed on thief's errand in his pockets, tampering with his papers for evidence of infidelity. Then that night in Philadelphia when he stepped out of the old Bellevue Hotel after an evening spent with kindred souls, only to discover in the begoggled and closely veiled appearance of a beggar wench the guise of his lawful wife hunting him down like a spy. And the news he would be getting, item upon item, of what she had been giving out about him broadcast to cripple his standing and force him to regard her the only permissible object of all his attention, all his ambition, all his pleasure! A huge monopolization plan, this, that she was ever perfecting at the expense of every womanly consideration, of propriety, of even ordinary decency. She had pursued her plan regardless of consequences to herself, to him, to anybody. Her love for him was as blindly jealous and selfish as it was satanic in results. All the trouble she was brewing, every detail of her slanderous intrigue, even the very outpouring of her heart and soul to him in moments of involuntary adoration, lent color and purpose from her one consuming passion: to keep him entirely for herself and keep all others away from him.

But in making him, a naturally taking soul, momentarily unpopular she destroyed his chance of success; in undermining his social prospects and his very status as a citizen among his fellows, she failed to offer any equivalent, only a "home" of quarrels; in her effort to compel others, particularly women, to ignore and, if possible, hate him, she did not manage to make herself the object of his love.

Erik Drost was going over all this somewhat more clearly now than formerly in the somber quiet of his Montmartre studio, only, as he was staring out of the lofty window he felt the touch of the past more keenly.

"If I could only convert this marvelous intensity of purpose in her toward better ends," he mused. "If she could be made to concentrate on myself, and not trouble about other people, I should have as much love out of that woman as I have had misery."

He heard a sinuous swish behind him and knew she had come. Instead of turning and greeting her, as a less typical man would, he remained immovable, saying quietly, but with a somber touch:

"I remember you very well, and you cannot have changed very much. Women set up like you do not yield to the ravages of time very gracefully. Before I look at you, tell me why you set this meeting here. You will not lie because you know I shall instantly know if you do."

His old masterful way lay revealed in this consciousness. It was so. He was well-nigh infallible in matters psychological, she knew.

She came closer. Evidently not without an inward struggle she ventured forward a hesitating hand. She was about to touch his sleeve with one gloved finger when she snatched it back like one prompted by pride.

"I can wait," he muttered, maintaining the severe manner, though there was little else but sympathy for her in his heart, but hidden at the bottom it was. "Take your time," he added with assumed hauteur; "this is an

occasion a trifle more important, I hope, than gossiping and shopping."

Her breathing was audible, like one battling mutely with oneself. Not wishing to prod her pride he dropped a somewhat less stern afterthought:

"I am disposed to be fairer with you than it ever could have been in your power to be with me."

"Then you do understand that it was only lack of power, not lack of—of—"

"—love, yes," he said simply. "You surely did not have it in your power to give me the love that was in you to give, Claire."

"Knowing this, how could you treat me as you did, Erik?"

There was a tremor in her voice, which did not escape the ex-husband, but he did not admit it by action.

"Not knowing it yourself, you would not have believed it possible for me to know. Consequently, you would not have believed me. There would have been a quarrel. Besides, you could not have believed me if I had told you at the time that my cutting loose with other women and upsetting you was really done in your interest as well as mine."

"You mean that we both wanted the same thing—a divorce?"

"We needed it more than we wanted it, Claire."

Turning about in one surge he was just in time to catch her nodding a mute yes. He took in her person with eyes such as artists only have—eyes that "disrobe" a woman and penetrate the primeval marrow.

"Oh, don't look for *motifs* in me; I am a subject no longer," she burst out, noticing the almost professional glance, which seemed but a poor substitute for the kind she had half dared hope for.

He had seen everything in that one look—not the worn aspect of a woman having suffered much by him and more by her own temperament, but a woman breathing a sentiment of health and life rather superior to her virgin bloom.

"I wish I had not looked," he murmured and turned away. A flash of

wounded pride arrested her features, only to lapse into an expression of brooding joy as she softly realized the subtle flattery beyond the rough, ambiguous words so likely of a man who could not help instilling into the simplest discourse a touch of the unexplained, if not the mysterious. Solitude and continued absence had taught her to draw the reins on a temper that would otherwise have kicked over the traces here; she even experienced a certain sense of enjoyment in submitting voluntarily.

"And you will now go away quite satisfied, won't you?" he said with an air of finality.

"Satisfied? I don't know a stranger word," she said uneasily.

"Equally strange, perhaps, to both of us."

"If so—" she essayed bravely, but here he glanced at her again, detected her thought and outstripped it like nimble fire with a gentle warning:

"No, that would never do. We are 'jangled out of tune' and beyond repair. We have lost our chance and neither of us is ordinary enough to accept compromise."

"But this is leap year!" she suddenly insisted with almost infantile fatuity, adopting the cooing mannerisms of their early courtship. He faced her once more, this time softly and slowly, and placed his hand on her head.

"Poor little girl. You could not have unearthed a sacred sentiment like this were you most unhappy and miserable. Don't appeal to me with such tempting touches, for I cannot help you any more than you me. I feel truly sorry, Claire, more so than when we were one, and it comes hard to have to disillusion you. Believe me, you and I can never realize the ideal of our courtship."

She stood before him with bowed head under his hand like one who has received a token. She raised a pair of slender, sensitive hands and folded them over his honest sculptor's fist while she said in a voice barely free from tears:

"If we are irretrievably lost to each other, Erik, let me say that I have learned something during my long absence. I acknowledge my own terrible fault has ruined the ideal we were once so eager to build up, and now that we stand purified of past misunderstandings, of even the slightest animosity, now that we are really and truly fit, for the first time in our lives, we must desist, we must part—isn't this pitiful?"

He remained immovable, obviously under the burden of her words.

"Love is a race horse," he said finally, "and marriage is a harness—how can you reconcile one with the other?"

She made a gesture of impatience.

"I see clearly," he continued impersonally, "that for me to be happy, and my only chance was with you, would have been simply to love you and go on loving you—never to marry you."

"The racer without the harness," she divined, tasting the words as with a relish of pronunciation. "Are we great enough and strong enough for that, Erik?"

"Once, one of us was; now the other, who was not, is!" he said with the surety of one confident of his own intuition. She stole a limpid glance at him. Any other woman, he could not but help thinking, would have curiously asked him to explain. Instead, the idea beginning to fascinate her, she chose to dwell on it in his words, repeating: "The racer without the harness! Are you sure, Erik, it would make for happiness?"

"We are too cultured to be happy, believe me. I, for one, do not find it necessary, but it is good medicine for the needy, I'll admit. But in our case, Claire, there is no racer left, nor even the harness that crippled him."

"Oh, I am not thinking of the poor cripple that lies buried in the divorce court; I am thinking of the *new* racer."

"How like a woman to confuse love with a stud farm of infinite choice," he smiled passively. "My dear girl, love gives you but one real life-throb-

bing chance at happiness. Everything else is make-believe."

"Then, Erik, we two are entirely beyond hope, are we not?"

"Not quite. There are other steeds than that of happiness—especially for people such as we."

"For instance—what?"

"Friendship, a steed well worth riding and seldom driven in harness."

"Oh, pshaw! After love, friendship would be a sort of compromise."

"It might have seemed so before when we were both foolishly moaning for happiness like children whimpering for perpetual sunshine. We are, I hope, of sterner stuff now. I should very much prefer the variable skies of a common, but lofty, friendship of the earth earthy to the tinsel glories of story book happiness."

She brought his hand down clenched in both of hers and looked him through and through for a long while. He mellowed a trifle and smiled; she, joining tenderly, drew nearer. He placed his free hand right comradely on her

shoulder and made as if to speak, but she anticipated him.

"If you hadn't said what you just did say, I should say you were rightly and truly in love with me now that you see a chance to get me free, not bound—the racer without the harness."

"There will be a situation which no newspaper in the country will omit to turn into an excessively suggestive scandal. Fancy a man falling in love over again with his divorced wife, yet not living with her in 'harness'! Could you stand it?"

"No two human beings are quite alike, nor do they act quite alike, least of all when in love. I am quite ready for a new departure with its attending scandalmongery. The more I think of it the grander it looms before me: the racer without the harness."

He admitted to a smile such as he was well-nigh famous for, a smile with a core of mystery, sadder than it was bright, yet wonderfully illuminating.

"We shall not quarrel about it, Claire," he murmured.



THE ROAD

By EDNA VALENTINE TRAPNELL

GOLDEN lay the westward road in the autumn weather,
Where my love and I would walk hand in hand together.
Sweet the hours and sweet the flowers and sweet my true love's eyes,
Wandering down the westward road that led to Paradise.

Weary lay the eastward road in the winter's rain,
Road my feet had often trod, ne'er to tread again.
Drear the day and drear the way and blind my eyes with tears,
When I went down the eastward road to face the empty years.

Four roads led from Paradise—so the legends run—
There's but one road in my heart, red with autumn sun,
Gray with rain of winter time; on my heart it fell,
But that road led to Paradise—and that road led to Hell.

ROBINSON CRUSOE'S ISLE

By B. J. DASKAM

"I AM to understand, then," I said plaintively, "that you absolutely refuse to take me to Plum Beach tomorrow."

"I," said Betty, "I refuse? I merely remarked that, to the best of my belief, you hadn't been invited. It's mamma's party, you know—and Mr. Van Dresser's."

"Van Dresser!" I said scathingly. "Van Dresser and that old tub of his that he calls the *Swallow*! Because it swallows more water than any other motor boat in the harbor, I suppose. Seriously, are you going to risk your life and that of your revered mamma in that leaky old skiff?"

"The *Swallow*," said Betty coldly, "is a very fine boat, as you know. Possibly you are jealous because she beat your *Aces Up* in the All Comers' last Saturday."

"Beat *Aces Up*!" I gasped. "My dear Betty, the *Swallow's* allowance was one-thirty—next to the largest time given—and I was scratch. Surely you must be joking! Why, he didn't even finish!"

"A matter of small importance," said Betty grandly; "if something hadn't happened to his propeller, or something, he would undoubtedly have won. I know, because Mr. Van Dresser assured me that his engineer said—"

"His engineer!" I snorted. "Why doesn't he drive himself? Because he can't, that's why, and he's afraid to learn! I suppose this engineer will accompany you tomorrow."

Betty drew little pictures in the sand with the tip of her parasol.

"If he's invited," she said pointedly, "he'll probably go."

I rose with as much dignity as it is

possible for one in a bathing suit to assume.

"And I shall go, too," I said firmly, "on urgent invitation from—from mamma!"

Betty said nothing, but as I strolled toward the pier I heard her humming the latest popular air: "It's just about as likely as a trolley line to Mars."

The tide was almost out and practically everyone had left the water; but as I came to the end of the pier, I discovered Jimmy sitting in gloomy solitude astride the springboard. Jimmy was fifteen, and besides boasting the proud distinction of being Betty's brother, was my sworn friend and ally. But just now the very droop of his brown shoulders spelled dejection.

"Greetings, Jimmy boy!" I said. "Why this air of gloom? Has Marna gone fishing with Willie Hislop again, or—"

"Quit your kidding, Tommy," he said. "I'm in trouble."

"So am I," I said dolefully. "Let us console each other. What is your secret sorrow?"

"They ain't going to take me to Plum Beach tomorrow," said Jimmy savagely, "and Van Dresser's mechanic's pickled today—he's always pickled on Sundays. So he won't know the sparker from the gasoline tank tomorrow, and Van, he *never* knows 'em apart. Now I leave it to you, Tommy, does a feller like to see his family go out like that in an old tub like the *Swallow*?"

"Most certainly not, Jimmy," I cried indignantly, "most certainly not! We must undoubtedly try to do something about it!"

Jimmy wriggled about on the springboard and stared at me.

"We?" he said doubtfully.

"We," I said decidedly. "Did you think that I would desert you in a crisis like this? Never! Let us plan something."

"It's no end good of you," said Jimmy gratefully, "but," he added dejectedly, "I don't see what we can do."

"We must consider," I said.

From some complicated fold of his jersey Jimmy produced a cigarette case, and we sat together on the broad plank, staring out at the harbor where the motley fleet of launches, yachts and motor boats swung at their cables.

"I might," said Jimmy tentatively, "I might get old Van out in the car some way or other and then run him to the end of the earth or somewhere, and break down or something."

"They'd go on Tuesday," I objected.

We smoked in silence.

"Jimmy," I said at last, gazing pensively at the little fleet, "what if something happened to that reclaimed dory?"

"Nothing will happen to it," said Jimmy pessimistically.

"No," I said, "but, just for the sake of argument, suppose that somebody swam out and—well, filed the rivets in the propeller shaft, for instance?"

"I say!" whispered Jimmy.

"*Aces Up*," I continued dreamily, "is moored only a cable's length away. Suppose I should drop my key and somebody knew that there was a file in my locker?"

"I say!" said Jimmy again.

"Of course," I added hastily, "no one *will* do it, but if they *should* and the mechanic was *very* pickled tomorrow and the propeller jumped off, and you and I happened along at just the right moment in *Aces Up* . . ."

For the first time our eyes met.

"Where's the bally key?" said Betty's small brother.

II

Aces Up ducked her nose into the spray for her first wild leap, and as she settled down I heard Jimmy sigh contentedly.

"Will we catch 'em before anything happens?" he asked.

"We ought to get them in about six minutes," I said. "They've been out just five, and I figure that will make it about right."

A sudden thought moved Jimmy to speech.

"That wasn't a cad's trick we played on old Van, was it?" he asked anxiously.

I hastened to reassure him.

"All's fair in—" I began; "—the defense of one's family," I finished rather lamely.

"There they are!" cried Jimmy suddenly. "Seem to be all right so far."

"Are you sure you cut deep enough?" I demanded.

"Sure," he said. "I filed 'em. What— Oh! Somethin's doin'!"

The *Swallow* was obviously in trouble, but as we came alongside the mechanic had her in hand and she lay idly pitching in the trough.

"What's up?" I called, as Jimmy shut us down. "No trouble, I hope. Good morning, Mrs. Thornton. 'Morning, Betty. How're you, Van Dresser?"

The mechanic, a stout person of Teutonic origin, was fussing with the motor.

"Der propeller has broken itself," he announced bitterly to the world at large. "I haf said that we should haf a new shaft. Only last week in der race I haf said it."

"Patch it up," ordered Van Dresser testily; "patch it up, and let's get along."

Jimmy chuckled behind me.

"Your screw's twisted clean off, Van," he said. "She's safe at the bottom of the Sound by now. It's the docks for yours!"

"That's mighty hard luck, Van Dresser," I said sympathetically. "Can I give you a tow to shore, or—"

"Oh, dear!" sighed Betty. "We won't make the beach today, then, will we? And it's such a day!"

"Very unfortunate, I'm sure," murmured Mrs. Thornton.

"It's a pity to spoil your trip," I said.

"I say, Van Dresser, won't you take *Aces Up*? Jimmy and I will help your man get the *Swallow* ashore."

"Oh, do, Mr. Van Dresser!" cried Betty. "I'm sure that three of them can take care of the poor *Swallow*."

She shot a vindictive glance at me, but I only smiled back sweetly. I knew Van Dresser would never dare drive a strange boat alone.

"Mighty decent of you," he murmured, "but—"

He looked inquiringly at Mrs. Thornton. It was the crucial moment.

"Can't you come with us, Mr. Ogden?" she said—as graciously as if she really meant it. "Unless, of course, you've something else on. I'm sure you'd prefer to drive your own boat."

"Shall be delighted," I said hastily. "Can your man tow the *Swallow* in with the dingey?"

"He'll have to," said Van Dresser vindictively.

And as they came aboard, for the fraction of a second Jimmy and I gazed into each other's eyes with mutual, triumphant admiration.

III

"Do you usually tow a dingey?" asked Betty.

"I never saw you with one before, except on a luncheon party."

We sat in a little patch of beach timber on one of the myriad tiny islands that skirt the coast. Far down the shining beach Mrs. Thornton superintended the labors of Van Dresser and Jimmy, who were repacking the lunch hamper. The dingey was drawn up on shore and *Aces Up* was safely moored beyond the treacherous rocks of the shallow bay.

"We were afraid, Jimmy and I," I explained, "that something would happen to the *Swallow*, and so—"

Betty gazed at me, long and questioningly.

"I believe," she said thoughtfully, "that you know something about that shaft."

"Preposterous!" I cried. "Why, I

told you that the old skiff wasn't seaworthy, didn't I?"

"You did," she admitted, "but I fail to see that that proves anything in regard to the shaft."

"We came," I said hastily, "to look for beach plums."

Betty opened her parasol.

"True," she said; "let's go on."

"On second thought," I said judiciously, "it's very comfortable here, and, anyway, the plum season has been over for a month."

She glanced up indignantly.

"Why, Tommy Ogden!" she cried. "Do you mean to say that you lured me away to look for plums, when you knew—"

"Merely a subterfuge," I explained airily. "I wanted to get you alone to ask you for the hundredth time—"

Betty sighed in a resigned manner.

"Oh, very well," she said. "Hurry up and get it over with."

"I was about to ask," I continued coldly, "when so rudely interrupted—to ask you what in the Seven Seas your revered mamma sees in Van Dresser."

"Sees in him?" repeated Betty in her haughtiest tones. "Sees in him? I really don't understand you."

"Oh, yes, you do," I chided her. "You understand me perfectly. Come now, Betty, be honest. I've got at least a million more than he has, and as for personal attractions—well, modesty forbids me to continue the comparison. What is it, Betty?"

She again fell to drawing little pictures in the sand.

"If you'll promise never to tell," she said at last, "I'll let you into a secret. You'd never guess it in a hundred years, but mamma does really prefer you to Mr. Van Dresser!"

I started eagerly forward.

"But," she continued calmly, "it's a theoretical preference, based on—on those personal qualifications which you so modestly forbore to enumerate. Practically, you see, your father made his money in pork—plain, unvarnished pig—and mamma shudders at the thought. But Mr. Van Dresser has had his money in the family for hundreds of

years. So mamma would never, never, *never* consider you as—that is—well, consider you at all seriously, you understand."

"But you, Betty," I pleaded fatuously, "you, yourself—never mind mamma!"

"Don't be ridiculous, Tommy," she said. "If you could only see how much you resemble Mr. Hackett! Hark! Aren't they calling?"

I glanced down the beach and saw the three wildly beckoning. At the same time I discovered a huge black cloud that had stolen over the lea of the island unobserved. A sudden flurry of rain stung my cheeks as I started up.

"We must run for it, Betty!" I cried. "Gad! It's a corker!"

As we sped down the hard beach, I could see that a violent argument was taking place between Jimmy and Van Dresser, but before we had covered half the distance the three boarded the dingy and put off in the chopping water.

"They're—leavingus!" panted Betty.

"The dingy won't carry five," I puffed. "Jimmy'll take them out and come back for us."

The wind had risen to a gale, churning the waves until they were covered with foam, so that it was with a distinct feeling of relief that I saw the little skiff lay alongside and the three scramble aboard.

"Look!" called Betty. "Oh, *look* at the storm head!"

As she spoke, the cloud enveloped us in a blinding flurry of wind and rain. From the harbor came a faint, unintelligible call, and then suddenly I saw *Aces Up*, with Jimmy at the wheel, shoot out into clear water, flying like a thistledown before the wind.

Betty grasped my arm convulsively, and we peered through the storm until the little boat was lost in the smother of rain and spray.

IV

"ARE you *sure*," asked Betty for the hundredth time, "are you *sure* that they're all right?"

"Right as right!" I answered cheerily. "*Aces Up* can't go wrong, and I'd about as soon have Jimmy steer as myself."

We crouched together under a huge shelving rock in the center of a thick grove, trying vainly to shelter ourselves from the driving rain. I was wet to the skin—my coat was over Betty's shoulders—and, in spite of my assuring tones, really anxious about the others; but for compensation Betty's wet shoulder occasionally touched mine and damp wisps of hair brushed my cheek at the will of the wind.

"You'd better save all your pity for us," I continued. "We're the ones that need it. Jimmy'll stand out for the harbor light and then run in home—I hope; and they can get dry clothes and wet drinks before they come back for us."

Betty pondered over my consoling remarks.

"Do you mean that they'll go all the way *home*," she wailed, "before they come back for us? Why, it will be dark!"

"Perhaps," I said, "the storm will blow over and— Look! It's going by now!"

The cloud was gradually drawing away, and with one last vindictive drive of rain, which completely finished the task of drenching us, the storm passed as quickly as it had come. Within five minutes the leaves were glistening in the scorching rays of the afternoon sun and the shore birds were singing as gaily as if we were safe in *Aces Up* instead of marooned on this uninhabited little island.

"Heartless little wretches!" said Betty. "They haven't a thought for us. Oh, Tommy, let's hurry down to the beach and see if the boat is in sight!"

"We mustn't hope for them too soon," I reminded her. "But the walk is a good idea. It will dry us out."

"You should build a fire," said Betty, "and then find a breadfruit tree or some turtle's eggs or something. You're not a bit inventive."

I searched my pockets vainly for dry matches.

"In all the books that I have read," she said in polite scorn, "a little thing like that was nothing at all. Can't you rub two sticks together?"

"I'm afraid not," I admitted regretfully, "but the sun will do it all right. Come on, let's go down the beach."

As we strolled over the hard sand Betty cast an anxious glance at the harbor.

"Oh, I do hope they—"

She stopped suddenly, grasping my arm, and we stood petrified with astonishment. For from the other side of the point, just out of sight, there came a sharp, high pitched call:

"Friday! Friday!"

We stared blankly at each other.

"I thought . . ." whispered Betty. "What do you suppose . . ."

"There's only one thing to do," I said decidedly; "you stay here and I'll go to see who it is. From his few brief remarks, I should imagine that it's Lawson advertising his book, but, anyway, I'll see."

"I'm coming, too," said Betty firmly. "I won't stay here alone!"

As she spoke, the crunching of the wet sand was plainly audible and a most extraordinary figure crept around the point.

A little, frail man, clad in the most astounding costume, which seemingly consisted of furry lap robes roughly stitched together; on his head a great peaked cap of the same material wagged as he crawled—for he was on hands and knees, intently studying the sand through a pair of gold-rimmed eyeglasses! From his belt hung a curious object, which I finally recognized as a huge telescope, and behind him he dragged a great, clumsy musket.

As he came he muttered to himself:

"Most extraordinary! Most extraordinary! These are certainly footprints! Footprints on my island!"

And again he called shrilly:

"Friday! Friday!"

I could hear Betty gasp beside me, but I was unable to tear my eyes away from the strange little man. Suddenly the memory of one of my childhood classics came back to me—"Davy and

the Goblin," I think it was—and I remembered a picture of a little boy standing on the beach, while before him, surrounded by dogs and cats and parrots and goats, stood Robinson Crusoe in the flesh! So ludicrous was the thought that I laughed aloud, and the little man, raising his head, saw us for the first time.

Instantly he sprang to his feet, and fumbling at his belt, with shaking hands he extended the telescope, regarding us through it. Then, with one last bellow for Friday, he leaped nimbly behind a huge boulder, and with a sinking heart I saw his fuzzy cap bent over the gun barrel, which was pointed straight at my devoted head!

As I pushed Betty behind me, I distinctly heard the click of a hammer drawn back.

"The barrel is made of wood," said Betty calmly. "Look! It isn't even hollow."

As my eye followed her finger I saw with a feeling of relief that she was right.

"What is it?" I whispered—"comic opera or an escaped patient?"

"Anything but patient, I should say," she replied. "Just hear him!"

From behind the rock the furry man was still screaming for Friday, and an answering hail told us that his summons had been heard.

"If Friday dresses the part with the same thorough detail as his master," I whispered, "I should advise you to close your eyes."

But the young man who came down the beach at a brisk walk was fully clad, his costume consisting of faded khaki riding breeches, puttees and a dirty white sweater, topped off with a battered derby hat perched jauntily over one ear. As he reached the point he took in the scene with rounded eyes.

"Gee!" he gasped, and broke into a run, shouting as he came.

"Don't you be afraid!" he called. "That gun won't shoot! All right, Master; I'm comin' as fast as I can!"

At the sound of his voice the little man dropped his musket, and with one frightened glance at us scurried toward

him. For a while they talked together and we caught high pitched, excited snatches of conversation.

"Most extraordinary . . . on my island . . . cannibals. . ."

Finally we heard the soothing tones of the new arrival.

"All right, Master, all right! You just trot along to the house—cave, I mean—an' leave them to me. If they ain't friendly I'll take 'em prisoners. You just run along an' I'll attend to 'em."

Evidently this was satisfactory to the furry man, and he trotted obediently down the beach, turning off at the spring.

The young man in the derby came up with a broad grin on his face.

"Gee!" he said cheerfully; "maybe the Boss didn't have the Indian sign on you folks! But he's harmless, the old man; just a little bit—you know."

He tapped his forehead significantly.

"But there ain't a mite of harm in him. He thinks he's Robinson Crusoe, he does. I used to be his groom before he went batty, an' now I'm Friday—or some other day in the week. But what I really do is to cook an' look after the shack. The Doc, he plays solitaire, mostly. Where's you folks' boat?"

I told him of our plight and he was all sympathy.

"Gee! It sure did blow some!" he said. "An' rain—my eye! You folks must be soak— Oh, come on up to the shack an' get dry an' some hot tea. The Doc'll be tickled to death to see you. I ain't much on interlectooal conversation, an' Robingson, he don't talk to the Doc at all—pertends not to see him on account of there not having been no such person in the book. So I guess the Doc is pretty sore on the whole business. But, say, he gets a salary that would make King Leapold look like a piker! Come on, let's hike."

Betty and I, lost in wonder, followed him meekly down the beach.

V

THE bungalow was perched on a little rise in a clearing, and before the door a young man, clad in immaculate flannels,

sat in a Morris chair playing Canfield, with every appearance of loathing the man who invented the game.

Robinson himself, ignoring the various comfortable chairs on the veranda, was perched on a nail keg, diligently studying the surrounding country through his telescope. As we approached he sprang to his feet in alarm but our escort hastened to reassure him.

"All right, Master. They ain't no cannybils. They're friendly, they are—members of my tribe. Don't you be afraid."

Evidently the little man had implicit confidence in his faithful retainer, for without further question he resumed his occupation of searching the landscape with his glass.

"Say, Doc," continued our affable sponsor, "here's some folks stranded in the storm. I brought 'em along to get dry till their boat comes back. An' I guess I'd better shake up a fire an' make 'em some tea."

He disappeared within the bungalow, while the Doctor stepped forward eagerly with outstretched hand.

"Gad!" he said; "I'm sorry you're in such a fix, but it's an ill wind, you know . . . Morgan is a first rate man, but his ideas are—to say the least—elemental. I'm so beastly bored that I'm almost glad you were marooned. I didn't quite catch the name . . ."

All the while he was shaking my hand vigorously and glancing over my shoulder at Betty, standing demurely in the background.

"Ogden," I said, "Tommy Ogden, and—"

But it was impossible to stop that flow of language.

"I'm glad to know you, Mr. Ogden," he cried warmly. "Gad! I'd be glad to know you if you were a Chinaman—just for a change. But I mustn't keep you and Mrs. Ogden standing around in your wet things. Come right in to the fire and dry out. I can fit you out with some dry duds, but I'm afraid that Mrs. Ogden—"

I interrupted him hastily.

"Not Mrs. Ogden—yet," I said.

"Let me introduce you to Miss Thornton, my fiancée. Betty, this is Dr.—"

"Curtiss," he said. "I'm sure you'll pardon my error, Miss Thornton. Inexcusable blunder, quite inexcusable, but I see so few—few *white* people, you understand—that—"

I heard Betty gasp as she came forward, but I continued brazenly:

"And now, dear, you'd better get as near the fire as you conveniently can, while I accept Dr. Curtiss's kind offer of a change."

And Betty—Betty the masterful—went meekly into the shack! As the Doctor had said, it's an ill wind . . .

As he fitted me out his tongue wagged ceaselessly.

"You can't imagine how lonesome it gets here. I've had three months of it now, and I'd chuck it in a minute if it wasn't so—well, so lucrative, you know. Very dull case, very; just plain paranoiac, with no complications. But no end of money. Dr. Valinsky, the Polish specialist, has the case, but he only spends one afternoon here every two weeks when the supply boat comes in—and I have to rot here all the time! Four thousand, six hundred and thirty-eight games of solitaire I've played. Four thousand, six hundred and thirty-eight by actual count! We're working along Valinsky's system of auto-treatment—just humoring him, you know—but it's slow work, very slow. And meanwhile—"

But I managed to get the dry traps on and lead him out. We found Betty sitting beside the kitchen stove in earnest conversation with Friday, while the teapot bubbled suggestively. As we finished our steaming cups, the sun was already low in the west, and the warm dusk was falling over the little island.

"Do you think they're all right?" asked Betty plaintively.

I reassured her with every air of hopefulness, and both Dr. Curtiss and Friday were at great pains to explain to her the seaworthiness of motor boats in general. As a matter of fact, I was not so anxious as I might have been,

for I knew *Aces Up* and I knew Jimmy—both to be trusted.

"They'll be along any minute," asserted the Doctor. "Gad! The only thing I'm worrying about is that they'll take you away from me too soon! Morgan, is there anything in the house fit to eat?"

Friday bustled himself about dinner and we sat down on the broad veranda by lamplight.

Robinson was most affable, although he ignored the Doctor absolutely, and most of his remarks to us were of a highly moral nature, consisting of a set of treatises on cannibalism in general and our cases in particular. As his views on the subject were lengthy and he insisted on using Friday as an interpreter, repeating each remark made by either party, even Dr. Curtiss found difficulty in getting in a word.

Dinner over, the Doctor suggested a three-handed rubber so longingly that we had to agree. But Betty was so sleepy and so worried that she could not follow the cards, and after two rubbers he reluctantly suggested bed.

"Mr. Preston and Morgan have the front room," he said, "and Miss Thornton can have mine. Ogden and I will bunk out on the porch—I sleep there a good part of the time anyway; it's so much cooler. And then we could hear your friends if they should hail."

"Oh, they won't come till morning, now," I said lightly. "You see, the storm may have followed them for hours after it left us, and they probably didn't get in until late. Then, too, someone may have told them about this bungalow, so they wouldn't worry. They'll turn up bright and early in the morning."

I glanced at poor Betty as I spoke. Her lip was trembling a little, but she managed to smile as she said good night.

"We'll just take a look down the beach," said the Doctor hastily, "on the off chance that they've come in sight. Come on, Morgan."

As I rose to follow them I turned to Betty.

"Cheer up," I said. "They're all

right and so are we. Good night, dear, and pleasant dreams."

She turned at her door.

"Good night—dear," she said.

And while the Doctor chattered half the night, I sat on the veranda smoking—smoking and thinking little foolish, happy thoughts.

VI

ROBINSON awoke us in the morning, dancing up and down with excitement as he pointed his telescope at the little yacht standing off shore. I had hardly time to recognize the *Cynthia*, Van Dresser's cruiser, when a tender put off, and in no time at all Mrs. Thornton and Van Dresser and Jimmy fell upon me.

As we hurried up to the shack Jimmy babbled excitedly:

"We had to run before the storm, you know, and I couldn't put back for you two—and I knew you'd take care of Betty. We were going in great shape until the sparker jarred out, right off the light, and we drifted clean into Goose Harbor! By that time it was dark, and we got home by train and fixed up the *Cynthia*. Mother's been up all night, an' old Van is glum as an oyster!"

Betty was on the veranda when we came up, and she rushed into her mother's arms.

When she was thanking Dr. Curtiss he made the first break.

"It's been the treat of my life, I assure you, Mrs. Thornton," he said. "I see no one, you know, and your daughter and her fiancé have been a Godsend—manna in the desert."

Mrs. Thornton and Van Dresser never batted an eyelash, but Jimmy jumped up in the air and yelled.

"Whoopee!" he cried. "I say, Tommy, that's great! Ooh!"

And then he noticed the ominous silence about him and subsided.

"I'm sure," she said evenly, "I don't know what she would have done without you, even with Mr. — even with"—and her voice *did* falter, the least bit—"her fiancé to take care of her."

And as Betty and I sat together in the stern of the *Cynthia*, the last thing we saw was the Doctor and Friday waving to us, while Robinson studied us through his glass.

"Good-bye to Robinson Crusoe's Island," said Betty softly.

"Not Robinson Crusoe's Island," I corrected her; "I call it after my favorite work of fiction—Treasure Island."

Betty held my hand under cover of her cloak.

"You goose!" she whispered. "Do you think you found anything there that you didn't have before?"

And the little island grew fainter and fainter behind us, as the *Cynthia* stood out for the harbor light—and home.



CANTILENA

By THOMAS WALSH

IN young hearts spring sows tenderness,
 In old hearts, memories;
 Ah, who shall say what boon is less—
 Or happier who of these?
 With glint and song and flower among
 The nests of love and laughter—
 Or with sigh and scent of heart blooms spent,
 And the haunting beauty after?
 From young hearts spring reaps tenderness,
 From old hearts, memories.

IN HIS HOUSE*

By GEORGE MIDDLETON

CHARACTERS

SENATOR VOLNEY PIERCE

CLAIRE (*his wife*)

JUDITH SHANNON (*their friend*)

PLACE: *The Pierce Apartments, Washington.*

TIME: *The Present.*

SCENE—A room of a suite in an apartment hotel. Through the large windows at the right, which probably overlook a park, the brilliant sun pours, touching vividly the usual furniture resting in the usual way. The reflected gleam upon the telephone calls attention to the long table at the left upon which it rests, and a deep chair near it yawns invitingly. Another smaller table close to the window holds the magazines of the day and some flowers of the season. The couch, a few stray chairs and what-nots appropriately fill their mission. Two doorways, each half concealed through short hallways, lead off, one, at the right in back, which apparently serves as entrance from the house elevators without; the other, down at the left, which obviously opens into the more intimate living quarters. At the back, at the left, the curtained alcove does not completely conceal the outlines of another room which proves to be the library. There is little which is either very personal or characteristic in the atmosphere and the scene simply suggests, on closer inspection, the more or less temporary resting place of adequate means and position.

(The curtain rises with CLAIRE and VOLNEY seated as though there had been a long pause in their talking. CLAIRE PIERCE has just passed thirty, but it has left her jet black hair suspiciously touched with gray. From the settled expression of her face, with its high forehead and firm mouth, one deduces great strength of determination, and in the steady, large blue eyes is discovered a latent spirituality. But one cannot brush aside the thin veil which seems to hang upon the outlines as though she has passed through some indelible experience. While she sits watching her husband a vague restlessness tinges her words and actions.

VOLNEY PIERCE would easily attract attention anywhere because of his sheer virility. The gaunt, deep lined, middle-

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aged countenance, with its large, facile-lipped mouth and small, sunken black eyes, conveys the impression of deep living and thought. Yet there is, too, in his manner an instinctive appreciation for subtleties usually foreign to his type. His voice is resonant and contains notes of tenderness and emotion.

The long pause continues and during it he has again picked up his newspaper and begun glancing casually through it.)

VOLNEY

I'm afraid, Claire, there is nothing more to be said.

CLAIRE

In spite of my appeal, you feel you must do it?

VOLNEY

Yes; your reasons are sentimental, dear. I've thought it over carefully. It means my Senatorship another time—sure. (Significantly) You can never know how much I need the excitement of my career.

CLAIRE

For ten years your career has been my one thought. I don't want you to do anything dishonest now.

VOLNEY

It's politics, Claire. Addison controls the State legislature; he simply agrees to reelect me for certain considerations. It's done every day.

CLAIRE

But never before by you. You mustn't do it.

VOLNEY (rising, going to her and patting her tenderly)

There, there, Claire.

CLAIRE

You won't listen to me?

VOLNEY

I have, dear, patiently. When Addison 'phones me, let me know at once. I'm afraid I intend to consent to his conditions. (He goes out, leaving CLAIRE alone.)

CLAIRE

It's not honest; but, perhaps, I don't understand.

(She rises and crosses to the window, slowly pulling the curtains aside and looking thoughtfully away. She sighs, not hearing the telephone until its ring is repeated. Then she goes and takes down the receiver.)

Is this Mr. Add—Oh, Miss Shannon—Miss Judith Shannon? Tell her to come right up.

(She replaces the receiver and goes to call VOLNEY, but, on second thought, hesitates and walks off in back. There is a sound of greeting without, then she and JUDITH SHANNON enter.)

JUDITH SHANNON, past her first youth, too, with her auburn hair crowning an exceedingly mobile face and nervous black eyes, gives at first glance an impression of sex and temperament. But it is seen by her soft manner of speech and conduct that she has schooled and controlled her impulses beneath a cultivated mentality. She is a strong personality and immediately inspires confidence. One notices, however, that while she is evidently fond of CLAIRE, she is not quite at ease throughout.)

JUDITH

I'm so glad I found you.

CLAIRE

What a stranger for an old friend, Judith; it's nearly six months since—

JUDITH

I know; but horrid business difficulties with my publishers and—

CLAIRE

You'll stay with us now, of course?

JUDITH

No; I only ran over between trains. I'm sailing next Wednesday.

CLAIRE (surprised)

Abroad? Another of your sudden impulses?

JUDITH

I simply can't write here; I need sunlight and the sea. I'm going to a little island in the Mediterranean to finish my novel.

CLAIRE

How wonderful! I wish I were going

along. Volney'll be so surprised, too; we'll both miss you. I'll call him.

JUDITH (*slightly agitated*)
Is—Volney in?

CLAIRE

Yes.

JUDITH

I thought he'd be at the Senate—that we might be alone.

CLAIRE

No; he's waiting a 'phone call. He'll be so glad to see you.

JUDITH (*stopping CLAIRE as she starts to the door*)

Claire, don't call Volney—just yet. I—I didn't come over only to say good-bye—

CLAIRE (*her manner changing: her voice drops to a whisper; she does not conceal her excitement*)

Judith, you have some word from—

JUDITH

Yes.

CLAIRE

Has anything happened to him?

JUDITH

I have a letter for you.

CLAIRE

Give it to me. Wait.

(While JUDITH takes the letter from her bag she watches CLAIRE half with pity and criticism as she goes first to the door, left, and then to the library and back. After convincing herself that they can't be heard she comes down to JUDITH.)

Volney must have stepped into his own room.

JUDITH (*taking another sealed envelope which is inclosed in the letter and hesitating*)

A friend who was with him sent it to me with the details. He must have given my address. It's not very good news, I'm afraid.

(CLAIRE is awed and apprehensively takes the letter slowly from JUDITH's reluctant fingers. She looks at the handwriting on the envelope a long while, recalling memories, then sits by the table and finally tears the letter open. JUDITH silently watches her read what is apparently a short note. CLAIRE betrays nothing. She puts it down softly and bows her head. There is a long pause.)

JUDITH (*softly, as she refers to the other letter in her hand*)

His last words were of you, Claire. His lips were whispering your name when— They have buried him on the hillside overlooking the blue waters. They put violets—

(CLAIRE winces audibly and JUDITH places her hand sympathetically on the bended shoulders.)

Perhaps, Claire, you'd better read this yourself—later.

(She places the letter upon the table near her.)

CLAIRE

He blames me, Judith. He loved me to the end—yet blames me.

JUDITH

He must have suffered—and you here (*Glancing toward VOLNEY'S room*) in his house.

CLAIRE

Dead! Silence between us for seven years and then this—to blame me. And I loved him every moment. I loved him. (*She places her hands to her eyes; then she speaks in a strange voice.*) Judith, why don't the tears come? There are no tears; I can't even give him tears. He's dead! And they put violets—

(She bows again with one long sob—trembling. JUDITH stands by embarrassed at her own constrained sympathy. Some moments pass in silence.)

JUDITH

Perhaps I did wrong to tell you since it cannot alter matters here.

CLAIRE

You did right; a last wish is sacred and—and it will make a difference here. (*Though she glances toward her husband's room significantly, JUDITH conceals her eager interest.*) Volney owes me something he can never repay. I've lived here with him and sent the other away. Yet all the man I love sends me from his deathbed is blame for living in my husband's house. Oh!

JUDITH

That is natural, Claire. It's hard—bitter hard.

CLAIRE

But I've suffered too. He should have seen I was doing my duty. Was

it easy to give up all he was to me in spite of myself? You knew at the time *why* I kept my husband ignorant. And besides, Judith, Volney loved me.

JUDITH (*controlling herself with difficulty*)

Yes, Volney loved you. But I'd—I'd better leave you alone. Is there anything *I* can do?

CLAIRE

He is dead, Judith. What can you do? (Taking her hand affectionately) You've been so good. You bring all things back each time I see you; for you alone knew what terrible days they were when—when it was being finished. I never would have staggered through them without Volney's discovering, if it hadn't been for *you*.

JUDITH

No, Claire, I did nothing.

CLAIRE

You protected each of us from the other. If you hadn't been with him so much working on the articles together—Do you remember those articles? What were they about?

JUDITH (*struggling*)

I forget—I—

CLAIRE

Oh, Judith, each time when things became too hard later, you were always ready to help me. My strength has faltered so often but I kept on. Judith! Judith! Can I ever forget your goodness to me and to Volney?

JUDITH (*impulsively*)

Claire! Stop! Stop! I can't stand it. Let me go. I'm not a hypocrite; it isn't in my blood.

CLAIRE

Judith!

JUDITH (*almost fiercely*)

I can't take your thanks. I don't want you ever to speak of this to me again.

CLAIRE

Judith!

JUDITH

That's why I haven't been here lately, why I'm going far away for good. Your confidences have been a burning temptation to me. I can't bear them any more, do you hear? I can't live in this lie between you and Volney; it's crushing all that's decent in me. I can't.

CLAIRE (*in an intuitive flash*)
Judith, you love my husband.

JUDITH (*openly*)

Yes.

CLAIRE

Does Volney know?

JUDITH

Nothing. Though I knew you didn't love him as he thinks, I haven't been disloyal. (*Impulsively*) But I tell you, Claire, if he *had* loved me I wouldn't have been the coward—

CLAIRE

—that I was? You mean that?

JUDITH

You've wrecked a man's life.

CLAIRE

I did my duty by Volney.

JUDITH (*fiercely*)

Did you?

CLAIRE

Yes. What he has become through me proves it. His career is mine; his integrity—

(*She suddenly recalls the dishonest deed her husband is contemplating. The force of her words fails her and she sinks into the chair looking toward his room.*)

I tell you, Judith, I did right; of course, I did right.

JUDITH

And the other man?

CLAIRE

Judith, this is terrible of you.

JUDITH (*realizing her cruelty and going to*
CLAIRE *more tenderly*)

Little Claire, forgive me. I was a beast to add to your pain in this moment. Neither one of us is herself. Of course, Volney is your justification. He loves you; you need fear nothing from me. Forgive me. Only love means something different to me than you have made it. That's all. This is good-bye. But see that you never let him weaken for your own sake—if not his.

(*The telephone rings.*)

CLAIRE

Addison! (*She stands horrified realizing its significance; the long, impatient ring is repeated.*)

VOLNEY (*outside*)

Is that for me, Claire?

CLAIRE (*to herself as she slowly walks toward the telephone*)

Addison!

VOLNEY (*as he enters*)

See who it is— (*Sees JUDITH.*) Why,

Judith, I didn't know—

JUDITH (*self-defensively throughout as they shake hands*)

I've only come to shake your hand.

Claire will explain where I'm off to.

VOLNEY

Off?

CLAIRE (*having taken down receiver*)

It's for you, Volney.

VOLNEY

Tell them to hold the wire.

(CLAIRE *does so, mechanically putting the receiver down on the table, yet scarcely watching them.*)

You mustn't run away like this without—

JUDITH

I know it's horrid of me, but I didn't realize how long I was talking to Claire. Goodness! I am late for my train now. My cab's waiting. Good-bye.

VOLNEY

I'll see you down.

JUDITH

No. One mustn't keep a Senator's 'phone and business of state waiting. I've said good-bye to Claire. And now to you. Good luck, Volney, and happiness. (*She shakes hands again honestly, concealing everything, and goes out quickly.*)

VOLNEY

Why, how strange of her. I wonder why—

(*He stands a second perplexed and then goes off back to close the door. CLAIRE is alone.*)

CLAIRE

"Never let him weaken." (*Suddenly a determined look leaps into her face; she takes up the receiver not noting VOLNEY has reëntered and hears.*) Is this Mr. Addison? Well, won't you ring up later? Senator Pierce is not here. He'll be back soon.

VOLNEY (*coming to her*)

Claire!

CLAIRE (*hangs up the receiver and faces him*)

Volney, you shan't make this deal. I can't let you at any cost—*now*.

VOLNEY

Must we go over this again?

CLAIRE

For the last time. I beg of you not to do this. Can't your love for me without question do as I ask?

VOLNEY

It's absurd to put it that way.

CLAIRE (*preventing him as he reaches toward the telephone*)

This touches something deep between ourselves, Volney. I can't let you cheapen my ideal of you; I can't let you do one single thing that's dishonest—*now*. I'd rather lose your love; rather topple over whatever happiness and joy you have found in me than let you do this. I'm desperate, Volney. Give this up.

VOLNEY

Claire, you're ridiculously capricious today. What's back of this wild mood? Why should this be so abnormally important to you? I have said it's only a risk.

CLAIRE

It's your willingness to take it.

VOLNEY

What's the hidden reason that touches something deep between ourselves? Why should I give this up?

CLAIRE (*realizing what must inevitably follow*)

Volney, for my justification.

VOLNEY (*mystified*)

Justification?

CLAIRE

Yes. You owe me a great debt, Volney. You never knew. You must repay me now by keeping yourself the man I thought you. By keeping your career and integrity clean. That can be my only justification for what I've done. Oh! (*Her hand accidentally touches the letter she has placed in her bosom; she breaks a bit.*) You must justify me—you must. I see that; and nothing else—otherwise—oh, the horror, the grimness, the irony!

(*He stands looking at her as she is shuddering. Then he half turns her toward him, forcing her to look into his eyes.*)

VOLNEY

What is it, Claire?

CLAIRE (*without flinching*)

There's been another man in my life for seven years and I gave him up.

(*They stand some moments; then VOLNEY, very quiet, slowly takes his hands from her shoulders and sits upon the chair back of her. She still stands where she was without turning toward him.*)

Help me. Help me, Volney.

VOLNEY

Go on.

CLAIRE

There isn't much. I knew him before—before you and I—but I didn't realize till—till *afterwards* that the touch of his hand— Oh, I can't put it into words. But he loved me *too*.

VOLNEY

Why didn't he come to me?

CLAIRE

He wanted to.

VOLNEY

You prevented?

CLAIRE

Yes.

VOLNEY

Then why didn't *you* tell me?

CLAIRE

I didn't want you to know. I sent him away almost as soon as we both realized. We haven't seen each other since.

VOLNEY

Why?

CLAIRE (*turning toward him for the first time*)

For your sake.

VOLNEY

For me?

CLAIRE

I couldn't allow any blow like that to halt the development of your character; it was struggling between expediences and ideals; it had just begun to crystallize so strong and firm and—

VOLNEY (*incredulously*)

My development!

CLAIRE

And besides, I couldn't let any scandal hurt your career.

VOLNEY

How could that—

CLAIRE

You were a coming man; no matter how little you might be to blame, the voters would never have supported you. You wouldn't divorce me; you were too—too decent, and there was no cause save just I loved him. And I couldn't get the divorce by paltry connivance, for you never would have been able to explain to the public that it was for my happiness. So I—I sent him away—that, in the stress of public life, your character might grow even stronger with the woman you loved standing by and that you might not be smirched with a family scandal. Your career, your honor, your integrity have been everything to me. That's why you mustn't do this thing. For God, don't you see? If you fall or falter or weaken, all I have done will be terrible; for I've just learned that—that he couldn't forget me, that his life has been wrecked, and that he hasn't been strong enough to stand what I asked of him. And it's mainly my fault. Volney, Volney, you owe me something, for I gave up what the world calls happiness for your sake. Now you know, Volney; now you know—everything. Don't be ice.

(*She bows her head. VOLNEY's face has been inscrutably calm until, after she finishes, he slowly grasps the entire significance of her confession. There is a tense silence.*)

VOLNEY (*slowly*)

My career built with the wreckage of another life!

(CLAIRE watches him in suspense as he rises and after a moment's hesitation goes to the telephone.)

CLAIRE (*in a hushed voice*)

You'll give this deal up?

VOLNEY (*at the telephone*)

Hello! Give me Garden Seventy-one. Yes.

CLAIRE

You'll give this up?

VOLNEY (*ignoring her*)

Hello! Is Mr. Addison there? Yes; Senator Pierce. Thank you. (*Pause.*) Hello, Addison. I've been thinking that little matter over and I've decided I can't accept. (CLAIRE gives a cry of joy.) No. Under no considerations.

Personal reasons. Wait. (*Deliberately*) This is for your private ear; I'm also sending my resignation by the next mail to the Governor. Yes, resignation. No, I sha'n't even fill my unexpired term. Personal reasons again. I thought I'd tell you so that you could see the old man before it gets out. Irrevocably. Good-bye. (*He hangs up the receiver; they stare at each other.*)

CLAIRE

What have you done?

VOLNEY

You heard.

CLAIRE

Given up everything?

VOLNEY

I can accept nothing at that price, nor keep what I gained by it.

(*She is completely stunned and he continues with bitterness struggling beneath a cold, deliberate manner.*)

Was that your idea of my character? My love in those days? My strength? Did you think, at the test, I could not, as a man, stand alone?

CLAIRE

I only thought you needed me.

VOLNEY

I did your strength and love, but not your pity.

CLAIRE

You did not know *what* it was I gave you—the effect was the same.

VOLNEY

At the time, perhaps; but your own lie has killed its offspring; now everything's sunk down. The foundations have fallen because they were soaked to rotteness in a woman's tears.

CLAIRE

I gave them willingly for you.

VOLNEY

You expect *me* to receive them proudly like most men? Is that the sort of man you think me? To be proud when a woman sacrificed herself and the man she loved, fearing I would otherwise fall? That I couldn't rise above talk? Proud? It's an insult to all that's best in me.

CLAIRE (*halted completely by this unexpected reaction*)

Insult?

VOLNEY

Yes. Not to have had the chance to offer you happiness even with your poor weak fool.

CLAIRE (*defensively*)

You would have given everything, I knew, if I had asked. But that wouldn't have altered the other facts. I did what I thought was honorable by you.

VOLNEY

Honorable? You thought what you did honorable? You quibble with me because I was about to accept Addison's questionable offer; you are shocked by *that*; yet, with your flexible logic and feminine ideas of moral obligations for seven years you can see nothing despicable in living a lie in my house. Honorable? Ha, ha!

CLAIRE

I suffered for it.

VOLNEY

That was sufficient excuse, I suppose, for the deceit and the hypocrisy. You acted well; played your part splendidly; tricked even my instincts—for I never suspected.

CLAIRE (*with a certain desperate strength and sincerity*)

Give me credit for that. There would have been only a half-gift had I brought you daily tears and a sad smile. There would have been no sacrifice had I given you a broken reed for your constant care and pity. What if I have hid every sigh, every tear, every dull leaden empty hour? You blame me for the lie; credit me with my consideration and sincerity as I saw it.

VOLNEY

Sincerity? And you lived with me all these years as *my wife* and I never knew. Actress! (*Hitting himself.*) Fool!

CLAIRE

I accepted your name, your roof, your protection. There can be no half ways. I had to give if I took.

VOLNEY (*revolted*)

Wanton!

CLAIRE

No!

VOLNEY

I understand now. Wanton! With your passive pleasures, taking lips that

meant his, embraces that touched other memories into fire! And his name! How was it you never gasped his name?

CLAIRE (*desperately*)

Don't phrase those hours, do you hear? Don't go so far. I've done with all my woman's strength what I saw was right by you and you're pulling everything down upon me. I've shown to save your integrity I was willing to risk your love, by telling you what I have. But there are some things your tongue sha'n't touch. You think I did wrong, but I never stole one hour with him. I tell you I played straight that way.

VOLNEY

How do I know? How can I *ever* know?

CLAIRE

My word.

VOLNEY

Your word? When you lived this lie for seven years—when in not one single act have you changed toward me since I first brought you to my house. You've given everything just the same; yet it was a lie, all of it a lie. How can I believe in the truth of one single thing in the present or in the past? How can I, just because you've given your word—your word?

(She sits staring for a long while before her and the absolute uselessness of future words overwhelms her. He has halted, controlled himself and stands looking long out of the window. The sunlight lessens.)

CLAIRE (*in a dull, dead voice*)

That's true. It's over—finished. We can't live together any longer. What irony! Yet I had the courage to speak at last as I had the courage to live. You won't do the dishonest thing now. But what irony to have killed your love to save you from the other!

VOLNEY (*turning, questions himself a second, then after a pause, speaks with calmness*)

Claire, my love for you has been dead for some time.

CLAIRE (*silenced at first, not grasping it*)

It was dead before this? I did not kill it?

VOLNEY

No, it just passed.

CLAIRE (*smiling cynically*)

Even that. Then now it was your vanity and not your heart I hurt.

VOLNEY

I was going to sneak out of it—the injured party—but I guess we'd better face the truth between us for once.

CLAIRE

Yes, it would be best at the end.

VOLNEY

I considered this deal because I hadn't the moral courage to fight as I used to; for back of me here in my home I knew my own deception. That's why I couldn't play straight outside; why I needed the mere excitement to—to get away from things.

CLAIRE (*bitterly*)

So the man, too, could live with his wife when love was dead!

VOLNEY

It's different somehow.

CLAIRE

Everything is different with a man.

VOLNEY

Yes, the tolerance of you women has made it so. (*He starts toward the door.*)

CLAIRE (*to herself*)

Even that.

VOLNEY

I think that is all.

CLAIRE

What are you going to do?

VOLNEY

I'll arrange things. Then I'll begin new work and mold something apart from this lie. I can, I think. I'll take up my writing again perhaps. When things are settled I'll go abroad.

CLAIRE

Abroad? (*She recalls.*) Wait, Volney. (*Directly*) Is it Judith Shannon?

VOLNEY (*turning surprised*)

Judith?

CLAIRE

We do not always know one love is dead until another comes. Do you love her?

VOLNEY

No, certainly not. I've had enough of love.

CLAIRE

Go to her, Volney. When you are free, go to her.

THE SMART SET

VOLNEY

There never has been one word—

CLAIRE

I know; she told me. She loves you.
Go to her.VOLNEY (*to himself*)

Judith!

CLAIRE

That is the one last thing from me you
can believe; my life lie cannot touch
that.

VOLNEY

Judith!

CLAIRE

She knew about me and the other one.

VOLNEY (*with admiration*)And she never told me? How splen-
did of her!CLAIRE (*realizing what the future may
offer to him now*)

Go to her.

VOLNEY

I suppose we all deserve a little hap-
piness out of this tangle. I'll arrange
things quietly. I'll leave the house
tonight.

CLAIRE

Yes; tonight. (*With a despairing
emotional note.*) And what's to become
of me?VOLNEY (*kindly*)Why, you must go to him, of course.
Go to the man you love!(*He goes out quietly, closing the door.
She stands dumb at his words. Then
her hand touches the letter which JUDITH
has placed on the table. She takes it up
slowly and looks at it.*)

CLAIRE

And they put violets—

(*She stares before her; the day fades.*)

SLOW CURTAIN



AT LAST

By FREEMAN TILDEN

IN her childhood she was sad, because she felt that no one understood her.
In her girlhood she was alone—nobody seemed to understand.

Then she became a woman, and she hoped that the Man would understand.
But he didn't. All he knew was that he wanted to make her happy. So, of
course, he couldn't.

At last she met someone who understood. He was a musician who played
the violin two dollars' worth in a forty-cent *table d'hôte* where the water was
excellent.

He told her she was as beautiful as the rose—

That her eyes were like the sky above Capri—

That she had a Soul that called to his Soul—

And borrowed money of her early and often.

"At last I am understood," she said.

NO one cares much what you are doing, unless you try to hide it.

THE SUBSTITUTE

By ALLAN UPDEGRAFF

WHEN Hilda Reichman determined to shuffle off all that blood poisoning and a hospital surgeon had left of her mortal coil, her arrangements were characteristically careful and thorough. To the eyes of a critical onlooker, whose sleep her final preparations disturbed, they appeared somewhat reprehensible, as well.

Miss Reichman did not know of the onlooker's presence. She had chosen the long concrete pier as a proper place in which to take a quiet leave of an unprofitable existence. Except for two irregular piles of brick and lumber near the outer end, it appeared empty. The isolated position of the pier, and the hour, which was about three o'clock in the morning, were additional defenses against unwelcome humanity. She had always been a modest girl; and in this final disgarmenting of her soul she was moved by none of the feeling which impels many persons to write long letters and leave their remains conspicuously in good hotels.

Her first care upon reaching the outer extremity of the pier was to fasten a stone to the crutch that served her in place of a missing foot, and let it slide softly into the smooth black water. Then, sitting upon the wooden stringer that edged the concrete, she fixed a bit of chain securely about her waist. The other end of the chain was already attached to an iron umbrella stand. After testing this arrangement by several jerks and pulls, she produced a revolver.

"Here, now, I say, fair damsel!" sputtered the onlooker, scrambling uncertainly from his lodgings between the brick and lumber piles. "None o'

that, you know! Do you think I'm goin' to stand for fair damsel givin' me nightmare by shufflin' off in my own room? I guess you don't know little Johnny White!"

Miss Reichman was first startled breathless, and then filled with a great shame and with a great anger. Diana's face burned with no more consuming rage into the eyes of that indiscreet huntsman whose discovery was his doom.

The onlooker stood still and dusted his checked trousers with topheavy care. He was a fat, prosperous, healthy man of the traveling salesman type. His face was an almost perfect circle, centered by a short, button-shaped nose. The sickly light of the quartered moon, falling over the bald forward part of his head, resulted in an effect like ripened Roquefort cheese.

"Excuse me," he murmured in purring gutturals, evidently delighted at the discovery that Miss Reichman was much more exclusive and admirable than he had supposed. He mopped his forehead laboriously with a decorated pocket handkerchief, with the apparent intention of giving her an opportunity to direct the course of the conversation. But into Miss Reichman's mind had surged a frenzy of disgust, anger, scorn, and shame that resulted in a condition like aphasia; she could not have answered, she could not have moved, if she had wished.

"Excuse me," repeated the man, sidling toward her. "Just—er—excuse me." With the last word he stooped quickly and caught the revolver from her hand. Even at this indignity she did not stir. It was in her power only

to sit motionless, to stare at him with frozen hatred and horror. She made an agonizing effort to break the intangible bonds that held her, to slide forward into the smooth black water; but in a moment, slipping the revolver into a side pocket of his coat, he had caught up the umbrella stand, and held her as if she had been a performing monkey.

"There!" he commented, hugely pleased with his adroitness. "It would 'a' been a shame for you to shuffle off, you know. Honest, cross my heart, you're a gen-yew-wine peach from Peachville! And I may mention that, as a judge of peaches, I am *some!*"

He sat down ponderously at her side, holding the umbrella stand under the arm farthest from her and keeping the chain taut across his broad back.

"I know you must feel pretty much cut up, or you wouldn't 'a' thought o' this," he wheezed affectionately, leaning toward her. "But come, let's forget it! Every cloud has a silver lining! Won't you tell me all about it, now? I might be able to help you. Nobody ever come to Johnny White in vain for help when they was down!"

He touched her tentatively. She turned her face from him and trembled.

"There, now, don't cry!" he murmured, mistaking the nature of her tremors. "It'll be all right! Just leave it to little Johnny White. Lose your job, or somethin', did you? Well, Johnny White's got a roll big enough for two—in spite of it bein' the second day of his grand monthly celebration! There, now—there now!"

He put his arm boldly about her waist and drew her toward him. Her self-command was coming back to her; but in the midst of preparations for a wild attempt to throw herself from him into the river she was stayed as by the light of a sudden blazing idea. She allowed herself to be drawn back against him.

"That's the caper!" he declared, with intense satisfaction. "Just put your trust in Uncle Johnny! Why, I'd leave my happy home for you! Honest I would!" He brought his other arm

into requisition, allowing the umbrella stand to fall behind him. But he kept a tight hold on her, as if he still feared she might be capable of rash actions.

"It 'ud be a unspeakable shame for a grand, be-yew-tiful girl like you to shuffle off," he continued. "Why, just think of me, for instance; nobody to love me, all alone in the hard, cruel world!" His tone grew pathetic. "Yes, sir, nobody to love or care for me. It's no wonder men like me is driven to the solace of the flowin' bowl! If it wasn't for my monthly celebration, I'd be prematurely aged and broken in spirits!"

She moved closer to him.

"Ah!" he gurgled ecstatically. "It was certainly my lucky angel that led me over here tonight. You know, I was sittin' all alone down in the Hotel Richelieu, when it came over me what a nice thing it 'ud be to go over and see the river in the moonlight. Well, I was lookin' for Riverside Drive, but I landed up here—and thank the Lord I did, too! Bein' a little tired, I just laid down to rest over there. My hat, cane and gloves must be over there yet, come to think of it. Too much water of joy, my dear, too much water of joy! I had the vine leaves in my hair last night all right, honey peacherine!" He patted her knee with playful familiarity. He drew her close to him and beamed down on her with ecstatic delight.

And then, as swiftly as one might draw a sponge over a blackboard, his delight was obliterated, his jaw dropped. He drew back from her and gasped. His agitation seemed to center in the hand which had lain, a moment before, on her knee. He drew up his pudgy member and stared at it as if it had suddenly developed astounding qualities. The eyes which he turned down on her were the wide, startled eyes of a man who has seen a ghost.

"Have I got 'em?" he stammered thickly. "Or haven't you really got any—"

She jerked herself suddenly toward him; her revolver came out of his pocket, gripped in her long, strong hand and its roar was deadened against his

well filled waistcoat. He rolled back onto the pier, gasping and kicking. Miss Reichman, with her white teeth gleaming like a cornered vixen's, watched him. When he lay still, she got slowly to her foot, knelt down beside him and made sure that the bullet had entered between the proper ribs. Either the discovery that her outraged modesty had been avenged, or that she was no longer in danger, wrought a great change in her. She sank back upon the wooden girder, a somewhat perplexed but very calm and considerate woman. After some hesitation, she removed the chain from her waist.

Finally, with great repugnance, she knelt again at the man's side, and began to search his pockets. A leather wallet rewarded a few minutes' application to the disagreeable task. She rose, glanced inside and hastily thrust it into one of the pockets of her long

coat. The color of the thick pad of bills disclosed was the color of life to her. For several seconds her poster girl outlines were drawn up motionless in the moonlight, while she stood in re-aroused communion with the meanings and ways and means of existence.

Upon hopping to the place from which the man had crawled, she found his hat, cane and gloves neatly stored in a crevice in the lumber. The cane was a great assistance in walking. The gloves she thrust into one of the man's coat pockets, and the hat she fastened to his *boutonnière* by means of his necktie, first using the cane to punch a hole in the brim. It was clearly impossible to get the chain around his waist, and she compromised by fastening it firmly to one of his legs. Before rolling him to the edge of the pier, she buttoned his coat across his breast to prevent soiling the concrete. For so large a man, he made a very slight splash.



A DREAMER OF DREAMS

By MAUD A. BLACK

SING on, O birds, for the woods are green,
Flow on, O streams, 'neath the summer sky;
Though life be a stern reality,
A dreamer of dreams am I!

The earth is fair in the morning glow,
And winds go whispering softly by;
And I watch the flickering leaf shades dance,
For a dreamer of dreams am I!

I love the night in its solemn calm,
Nor sigh for morn when the stars shine high,
For I hear the voice of a mystery;
Oh, a dreamer of dreams am I!

In this world of mine there is naught goes wrong—
O scornful ones, ye may pass me by—
My heart is filled with eternal song—
For a dreamer of dreams am I!

THE JUDGMENT OF EVE

By MRS. LUTHER HARRIS

"**I** TELL you, any man is a fool," said Emmet, stretching out his long legs and clasping his hands lazily above his head, "who thinks he can span a thousand years of tradition and bridge the gulf which separates the Saxon and the Moor."

They were sitting in the marble-flagged *patio* of the Emmets' house in Tangier. The air was soft and languorously cool here under the orange trees by the old fountain, which splashed into a broken bowl green with the verdigris of time. Mrs. Emmet was, as usual, knitting on her eternal golf stocking. She sent these brilliantly variegated hose to her son in England, though whether he ever wore them or not remained an eternal question, ever on the lap of the gods.

Jimmy Beers had dropped down on Tangier a few days before—from God knows where. Jimmy was a bird of passage, a globe trotter of the deepest dye, as hopelessly nomadic as the Wandering Jew. Emmet was in the habit of saying that if he himself ever reached Heaven, he would expect to see Jimmy Beers's suit case, plastered all over with foreign labels, being hustled into the elevator by one of St. Peter's bellhops.

Emmet and his wife had been living their pleasantly Bohemian life here in Tangier for three years; transplanted Americans who carried their atmosphere and their homemaking proclivities into this alien land. Emmet was in the diplomatic service. He was a lean, long man with an agreeably ironic mouth that had half a mind to sneer, but ended by smiling. The lines of his face were the firewrought lines

that mean something burned away by the friction of life; they spell character.

"I've lived here long enough to learn that every blooming mother's son of them has a yellow streak," he went on sagely. "I wouldn't trust a man with a drop of native blood in him, not if he looked saintly enough to be holding a harp along with the star-eyed cherubim. You remember that *bon mot* of Napoleon's, don't you? He said, 'Scratch a Russian and you will find the Tartar beneath.' That's just as true of a Moor. Scratch a Moor and you will find the savage, the barbarian, beneath. No, sir, I don't trust 'em."

He bit off the end of a long black cigar and once more took up his jeremiad: "Now there's Ben Amer, for instance. He is the young and very handsome son of the late Kaid of El Kasson, and has recently come into his inheritance; been educated in England and has only recently returned to the land of his nativity. Speaks English fluently—speaks a lot of other languages, too. I've talked with him a lot and I've never yet heard him fall down on an English idiom. Wears absolutely correct and swagger clothes built by a Bond Street tailor. He is *au fait* to the last degree, and but for his complexion might be the son of an English lord. But he has the blood of the Moor in his veins, and, I tell you, no amount of education, or polish, or what we term 'civilizing influences' is ever going to bridge the gulf that yawns, and always *will* yawn, between the East and the West."

As Jimmy Beers merely looked interested and said nothing, and Mrs. Emmet's needle continued clicking

musically, Emmet lighted the big black cigar and prosed on:

"Yes, sir, he's a hybrid, is Ben Amer; and if there is anything more dangerous than a human hybrid I have yet to learn what it is. You see, in Tangier, Jimmy, a man who wears a coat, a hat, a necktie and a collar—wears 'em all at the same time, I mean—must be either a Christian or a Jew. Ben Amer wears just what he blame pleases, and seeks chiefly the society of us 'Nazarenes,' dubbed by the natives 'Unbelievers.' He has a *fandak*—"

"What the deuce is a '*fandak*'?" demanded Jimmy Beers.

"It's a stable full of fine, blooded horses; and Ben Amer has a *fandak* that would make the eyes of a horse-loving Englishman pop right out of his head—Arab beauties that you just want to hug!"

"That big gold-striped, black-hulled yacht we saw floating out there in the harbor this morning is his. Over there in the hills he owns olive groves, and I don't doubt their yearly output in oil would easily float one of Uncle Sam's warships. Last week he gave, at an enormous cost, a magnificent Moorish entertainment for the delectation and entertainment of the British Embassy."

Mrs. Emmet gave a dry little cough and looked over the tops of her glasses at her husband. "Why, James Fitzhugh Emmet!" she enunciated crisply. "The idea of your saying that, when you know just as well as you know your name that it was given solely and entirely for the 'delectation and entertainment' of Mrs. Ponsonby."

"Shucks!" said Emmet, whose reversion to type was one of his wife's "crosses"—he would never drop "those atrocious Americanisms!" "How you women do love to scalp one another! I suppose that's one of the 'judgments of Eve'—woman's inhumanity to woman."

Mrs. Emmet knitted one round on her golf stocking before she gave forth:

"I have noticed it is always very easy—for a man—to make excuses for a woman who has eyes like one of

Perugino's angels. If she had a hare-lip, or were cross-eyed—"

"She wouldn't *need* defending against the onslaughts of her sex. She would be immune, in that case. Anyway," he added with explosive emphasis, "Ponsonby is a beast."

"Which nobody will deny. But is that any excuse for her having led on—yes, I repeat, led on Ben Amer in so flagrant a flirtation that—"

"Led on your grandmother! As if Ben Amer needed any leading on! Nothing of the sort. She is a very unhappy woman, for one thing. Who wouldn't be with a beast like Ponsonby? That old cat of an aunt of hers held her the way a broker does his stocks, till the quotations are raised—then turned her over to the highest bidder. And think how young she was! A girl of nineteen is like a kitten that hasn't got its eyes open yet."

"Men," said Mrs. Emmet oracularly, laying her golf stocking in her lap and assuming an air of unfathomable wisdom, "are elemental creatures. They are incapable of understanding the complexities of woman. The plummet of man's understanding has never yet sounded her depths. You can make all the excuses you please for Mrs. Ponsonby because of her purple iris eyes and that way she has with her eyelashes, and because she wears her hair in a way to carry out her resemblance to the *Madonna della Finestra*. But just hear me prophesy: she will end by taking the bit in her teeth (in spite of her puritanical bringing up) and jumping the five-barred gate of convention."

Emmet gave the little apologetic cough which always preceded the expression of any opinion which differed from that of his wife. He seemed for a moment to be swallowing language which had not been properly masticated. But all he gave voice to was that classic expletive, "Shucks!"

"I tell you," perorated his wife with conclusive emphasis, "a woman is *always* the best judge of a woman."

It was late afternoon when Mrs. Ponsonby had ridden through the west

gate of the old city and come out upon that white road which ever seems inviting on and on. She had been in the saddle some two hours before she realized how intense the heat was. Presently she rose in the stirrups and scanned the horizon for the nearest bit of shade.

To the eastward a cluster of palms held inviting promise; beyond that an olive grove shone in the sun and a mossy-roofed bungalow of some sort nestled in the green vistas.

As she came toward the grove someone asleep in a hammock under the trees rose and came forward to meet her. As he emerged from the halo of dense black shade she gave a little gasping breath of astonishment and pulled her mount up short. For a moment her face paled, then she gave a toss of her chin and said "*Bismillah!*" like a native—as if she turned the situation over to Fate. Worn and weary, the oasis of shade about Ben Amer seemed a Valhalla of rest and peace. But she had not known . . . Oh, well, when Fate took things in her own hands like this . . .

To the man who came toward her from that restful shade it was as if the hand of Allah had been suddenly stretched forth. All his inborn Moslem faith in Kismet rose and sang within him. For the first time in years he said devoutly under his breath, "One God, His Prophet, *Bismillah!*"

For weeks life had been a torment; he was so black with brooding that when he walked through the crowded little market place in the old city where his face was so well known there was such a look on his face, such blackness in his eyes, that men made a way for him as if he had cleaved a path through them with a cimeter. He had risen at dawn this morning and had spent hours in the saddle, bent upon banishing by pure physical fatigue the engrossing thing that held him, flesh and spirit. For nights he had not slept; in the presence of others he slipped himself into a steel corselet of stoicism and iron endurance and easy nonchalance.

She slipped from her saddle and

laughingly extended her hand, pronouncing with a pretty accent her one and only phrase of Arab greeting. She stood drawing off her heavy gloves and explained that she had been riding for hours, had seen the little island of shade . . . "And this is one of your olive groves? I did not know. How strange that I should have happened upon your particular grove!"

"My ancient faith makes it easy to believe in the finger of Destiny."

She laughed and looked about her delightedly at the dense, cool avenues on every side, the flower-bordered paths, the bosky deeps of shade under the even lines of trees. His look swept her face like a weary desert pilgrim when he glimpses the cool spring; and they smiled into each other's eyes for pure delight.

"There is always something suggestive of the Arabian Nights in the way things seem to appear at your bidding," she said presently, when they sat by a little table under the trees on which glasses and decanters were being arranged. "It is just like the way Mephistopheles bobs up through the trapdoor in the stage. Quite as if you had a magician's wand, you know."

"I have not; else would I touch the eyes of your spirit at this moment and cause you to see in me the god of your idolatry."

She flung her riding crop and gloves on the grass and ran her fingers through the hair over her temples. "You were to say nothing more like that, you know," she half smiled, but a line of sadness lay on her lips. She had singular, smoke-colored hair, and she wore it wrapped in heavy braids about her head. It commended itself to the artistic eye because of its fitness and harmony with her somewhat Oriental cast of features. The South alone gives such mouths as hers, passionate, proud and sweet. Her eyes, when some deep feeling stirred her, darkened to that peculiar bluish gray the French call "London smoke."

All her claims to beauty were semi-tones; they stole on you unawares. She had a skin of creamy pallor with no

color in the cheeks. It was like the inner heart of a magnolia bloom. Only the lips were red—intensely red, like those the Singer of Songs in old Israel wot of when he wrote, "Thy lips are as a thread of scarlet." In repose her face was thoughtful, serious, almost sad.

When she looked at Ben Amer there was a lustrous softness in her eyes; and they were very wonderful eyes; they expressed an imagination and a temperament almost *exaltée*.

A servant brought a peacock feather fan. "It looks as if it might have belonged to Queen Esther," she laughed, and fanned herself. Her hair clung in little damp rings to her forehead. Riding clothes became her as they might have a tailor-made Diana.

Her voice filled him with a joy he made no effort to conceal. Wine was brought, and little cakes flavored with pomegranate seeds. Ben Amer's voice was like a lute in tune. The shade was cool and grateful.

She was not fond of wine, and she barely tasted this. It had an aromatic tang that did not appeal to her palate. They hedged their conversation carefully within banal conventionalities. Her glance filled him with a numb, helpless, tremulous ecstasy. And though his lips were forbidden to speak the words that burned upon them, his eyes caressed her and spoke a thousand endearments.

And, though she did not knowingly permit it, hers also spoke their secrets. It is a time-worn figure of speech that the eyes are windows through which the soul looks. Mrs. Ponsonby's soul seemed always leaning on the sill, looking out at you. Whenever their glance met he had always a deepened impression of her delicate reserve, her poised repose, her intense and vivid and almost exotic personality.

And while they talked carefully guarded commonplaces, his mind was teeming with a rage of endearing words he dared not utter. He revolved the slender neck of his wineglass in his hand, and as her glance swept the shadowy glimpses of the garden it left him free to study the soft contour of

her cheek and throat, the perfect physical quiet which always so characterized her and was in itself a charm.

His eyes were the intensely dark, amber-flecked eyes that express the masterful temperament. "Do you believe in the transmigration of souls?" he asked irrelevantly.

She shook her head laughingly, and because her eyes revealed so much of his dominion over her fancy she glanced away from him.

She had passed through so many moments like this . . . when it seemed as if Fate were tightening the thumb-screws, vaguely interested in her screams . . . If they could but have known what the coming of love was like, she argued, and guarded against it! But before they had known or been aware of its coming—the vague, perilous thing had flown into their breasts and rested there . . .

She tried still to smile when she glanced away, but her eyes were full of dreams. She had fought such long, silent battles with herself. She had never intended seeing Ben Amer again—alone. And next week her passage—hers and her husband's—was booked back to England and what stood for home. When she shut her eyes her mind reeled before the long, horrible stretch of the years . . . These were to be their last moments together, and she dared not even crowd them with memories that might be sweet.

This wholly strange warmth in her veins which came of Ben Amer's presence she would never know again after today. She turned a little pale and continued to avert her glance.

"Surely you remember. In another incarnation we were a pair of Greek chariot horses—you and I—side by side, in step together, just like music. Ah, but you were beautiful, with your shiny white satin coat and your splendidly arching neck! And I loved you. How I loved you!"

He bent forward, conscious of her nearness, the fragrance of her presence. "Surely you remember, Lotus flower. Surely you remember!"

"No, I do not remember. You are

quite absurd; and you were not to call me Lotus flower any more, you know." Then she tilted her chin alluringly. "I am much more like one of our Southern Cherokee roses—full of thorns. Which reminds me, speaking of roses, what is it smells so sweet? Is it that big purple flower here by the walk? I'd like a lot of it."

Ben Amer rose and brought her a huge cluster. "It is this," he explained. "I don't know the English name for it. I myself love it, but it is generally thought too cloyingly sweet—by foreigners."

She crushed the flower against her face. "I adore it! I adore it!" she said rapturously. "I believe I must have tropical instincts and tastes; I should love to be overpowered with beauty and fragrance. I believe I only love the things that are too"—she gave him her soft eyes over the blossoms—"too strong—to be overcome, and—that overcome me."

It came to him like a revelation that only a wooing as overwhelming as this flower was overwhelmingly sweet . . . His brain passed through one of those illuminative moments when the mind seems clairvoyant.

Her words, though he knew her to be unconscious of their significance, set his pulses beating wildly. The little white scar on his temple turned a vivid crimson. His hand trembled as he turned the amber wineglass.

"Do you know," he said softly, his glance caressing her, "that you waked me from a dream when you came? We were on my yacht, the *Nourmahal*—we two alone, together sailing into a new world—a world wherein I should have eternal possession of you. We two alone; the sea a Lethe to submerge the past. We buried all memories in it—and were glad."

She pressed her hands to her face a moment, pressing her fingers against her eyelids. "Don't," she said, her eyes still covered.

When she looked up his soft glance still lay on her face, and she drew a long breath like one whom peril has narrowly passed by.

"Must we throw away every chance of happiness—because of one mistake?" His voice seemed to arrest her very faculties, her will. She could only answer him after she had turned her eyes away.

"We were—to have—no more such talks as this, you know. It only makes it harder—for you. I don't mind saying it makes it—a great deal harder—for *me*." She spoke as if more to herself than to him, and a little sigh caught in her throat and trembled through her voice.

"If only one could begin life over again, but that is impossible. And it is childish and—and wicked to talk of it."

Old teachings, instincts inbred with the blood in her veins, traditions, all these things called aloud to her and bade her act in obedience to ideals, not emotions.

Some swift resolve wrote itself large in Ben Amer's face. His lips closed and that little white scar on his temple throbbed like a pulse.

"You are not drinking your wine. I am a thoughtless host! I have some that I feel sure will find favor with you; it is liquid moonlight, frozen music, what you will—anything that is poetic enough. I think it was revealed to one of my countrymen by Bacchus in a vision. And it has a bouquet like wild thyme blossom."

He rose with the ceremonious formality that was so large a part of his rearing. "Pardon me, I will command Hassam to bring it."

He walked to a little distance and she heard him conversing in Arabic with the servant. Hassam's eyes had a strange, momentary stare, but he instantly lowered them and salaamed with graceful meekness. She saw him go toward the bungalow with his little embossed Fâsi tray under his arm.

Presently he returned, still with meek eyes lowered, and filled Mrs. Ponsonby's glass. The wine's color seemed fittingly to uphold the myth of its godlike origin, for it sparkled like hoarfrost.

"I really do like this," she beamed,

sipping its delicate flavor. "I have never tasted many kinds of wine. I was a Presbyterian minister's daughter and wore a temperance pledge pinned to my little white frock when I was no higher than that." She made a pretty, curved motion of her wrist. "And I used to stand up on the platform at Sunday-school conventions and recite, 'Look not upon the wine when it is red.' *This is golden—this wine.*"

She held it up to the light. "I was a very nice little girl—when I recited at Sunday-school conventions. I have tried—hard—not to get too far away from that little girl." She glanced past him at the long purple reaches of the hills.

"Sometimes it hasn't been—easy."

Her eyelids drooped languorous and heavy over her long eyes, and just beneath them lay the mauve shadows that so enhanced their odd coloring and expression. They seemed to hold a memory of all the dreams of all the poets since the world began.

Over in the west the sun god had dragged his crimson mantle into the gray mist that stretched beyond the hills. "I must be going home," said Mrs. Ponsonby; "it will be much cooler now the sun has set. But I must see your flowers first."

They strolled about the paths of the old garden in that silence which is the most perfect companionship. The garden ended in a wall covered with some blooming vine, waxy white blossoms with a faint, illusive perfume. A little rustic seat stood against the wall and Mrs. Ponsonby sat down on this, conscious of a sensation of fatigue, of curious and overpowering drowsiness.

Something weighted her eyelids; they were like lead. She wondered vaguely why it seemed so impossible to shake off this lethargy, and she went on talking, somewhat ramblingly and incoherently.

She had not known, she reasoned, how very warm and oppressive the day had been—and that long ride. She was very tired. It was good to rest here in the shade. Presently she leaned her elbow on the seat and looked

up at Ben Amer, who stood with arms folded across his breast, looking down at her. He always had that gentle look, but with a suggestion of tense and repressed force beneath it. The slanting rays from that dying sunset over in the west edged her loose-tendriled hair with an amber nimbus. Ben Amer's luminous eyes seemed looking at her from a great distance off—a whole world's width away. She would have risen but that her body seemed suddenly to have taken on colossal proportions.

She lifted her hands to her hair with a great effort; a little breeze had risen and a soft tendril of hair blew across her face. The effort of pushing it back seemed quite too much to undertake.

She tried to say that she must be going, it was growing late; and she tried to rise, but gave that over, too, as quite too much of an effort. Nothing seemed worth while with this weight of deadly stupor closing in about her.

Dull, slow-moving cycles of time seemed to pass before her, entire solar systems. Whole worlds swam and vanished and floated again. And ever, through it all, she seemed to see Ben Amer, smiling—that slow, gentle smile; and once she heard him say, "Lotus flower."

She loved that little white scar over his temple; in mad moments she had felt that she would give her soul just to kiss that little white scar . . . and next week her passage was booked—hers and her husband's—back to England and what stood for home. And after that the long black stretch of the years . . .

Her eyelids lifted, fluttered and closed again.

A curious gray mist enveloped her like the atmosphere of dreams.

She struggled to bring coherent thought out of the chaos of her mind.

Now she remembered . . . She had fallen asleep on that little seat in the garden. She sat up, brushing the hair back from her damp forehead, and looked about her. A heavy perfume, as of burning spice, hung in the air; the place was cool and softly lighted.

She must have fainted; she remembered how strange she had felt when she sat there in the shade after drinking the wine, she who had never fainted in all her healthy young life.

She had a vague remembrance, too, of being carried; it had seemed through endless vistas of space. Yes, she must have fainted and Ben Amer and that black Hassam must have carried her to the bungalow.

Indistinctly, because something seemed before her eyes, she made out the figure across the room. It was someone bending over a lacquered table covered with tiny cups and pouring something from a silver filigree pot. The figure turned and came toward her.

She was drowsily conscious that it was Ben Amer and that he carried a small cup of black coffee. Somewhere in the room a burning censer swung, sweet with spicy fragrance like an Oriental casket.

The little cup clicked in the saucer with the trembling of her hand when she drank the strong, acrid coffee.

Ben Amer's face was startlingly white when she smiled up at him and handed back the empty cup. "I must have been overcome by the heat . . . What a silly thing to do—to ride—such a distance in that sun! I think—I was trying to ride away from myself."

"And you rode to me. Did I not say the finger of Allah—" She lifted her hand and shook her head at him with weak denial; a dull lethargy still clung about her senses. Ben Amer's eyes were grave and very dark, the amber flecks bright in their iris.

She leaned back against the cushions of the divan and gazed about at the shadowy interior: gold embroidered draperies, jeweled screens, a litter of *bibelots* on the table, an inlaid *escritoire* in a corner under a swinging lamp, softly shaded. Across a narrow doorway a silver dragon mouthed and grimaced, embroidered on a blue-gray curtain.

She sat up again now, very straight, and half rose, conscious of her heavy riding clothes. "I think I will ask you to let one of your servants ride

home with me. And I must be going at once. How cool it is in here—and what is that queer sound just like the beating of the screw in an ocean liner? Is this room moving or do I just imagine it?"

Ben Amer took a little silver bottle with an amethyst in the stopper from the table and handed it to her. "Try these smelling salts," he said. She inhaled them tentatively; his voice, with its velvety undertone, held a note of pathos. He sat looking at her, all his soul in his eyes. "Where am I?" she suddenly demanded, something like a chill of apprehension passing over her. "Where am I?"

"Attar of the rose, light of my life," he said, and drew her hand to his lips. "It was the only way. How, in a thousand years, could I ever have combated all your ancient prejudices, your iron-bound code of morals as rigid and cold and unyielding as a cuirass of steel? When a man of my race desires a thing with all his soul and every beat of his heart and the strength of his spirit—he takes it."

"What—do you mean?" she said, between white lips.

"That we are on the *Nourmahal*—and many miles at sea."

Then she looked wildly about her and gave a little inarticulate cry. Ben Amer would never forget the look she gave him. A look of swift comprehension, wholly terror at first. A chill passed through her; even her lips were cold. And her eyes grew childishly round, and stared.

"It was the only way, Lotus flower—the only way. We love each other—are we the first man and woman to whom the world is well lost? I come of a different race from your cold-blooded Englishman, your calculating American. I love you. Do you know what that means to a man of my race?"

"I begin—to understand. There was something in that wine?"

"Yes. I was dreaming when you came to me out of the desert today—and now I have made the dream come true, that's all. We are sailing away

into that new world where you shall be wholly mine. Sometimes we *can* make our dreams come true. You are not—sorry?"

Her face hidden in the hollow of his shoulder, she clung to him, sobbing. "No—no, I am not sorry. But oh, I never meant to give in—I never meant to! I would have fought it out all my life long—always I would have remembered that little girl in a white dress—who carried home the reward-of-merit cards from Sunday school—But oh, I am glad—glad—glad!"

"Didn't I tell you so?" beamed Mrs. Emmet over her golf stocking as she looked across at her husband behind his newspaper on the shady veranda. "Didn't I tell you she was planning some *coup de théâtre* like that? Always

with the dramatic instinct. Always with an artistic sense of effect, of a properly worked up climax. They have sailed away on that big, gold-striped yacht of his—and snapped their fingers under Mrs. Grundy's nose. You were so positive she would never do it—oh, yes, you *knew* those eyes of hers trumpeted truth! You knew! A man *may* have faint glimmerings, vain imaginings, but he really *knows* nothing of woman, positively *nothing*! She is a sealed book to him. Say what you please, a woman is always the best judge of a woman."

That pleasantly ironic mouth of Emmet's, that had half a mind to sneer, again ended by smiling.

"Perhaps you are right, Mary," he said, noncommittally. "Perhaps you are right. The best judge—and the best executioner."



MEDITATIONS OF A MISANTHROPE

By REGINALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN

SUB ROSA there are many thorns.

A youth is known by the sisters he has.

In the average game of hearts, diamonds are trumps.

The greater the cost of living, the lower the price of bachelorhood.

A woman is at her best in happiness; a man in disappointment.

Some girls consider one mole a beauty mark, and some wear polka-dot veils.

If you begin by paying her attentions, you must end by paying her bills.

It costs money to get married—but it costs more to get divorced.

Love will find a way—into matrimony, but only a lawyer can find a way out.

Woman is like a turbine ship: she has huge motive power and no rudder.



THE self-made man would have saved money if he had built himself on his friends' estimate.

THE RIGHT VOICE

By ANITA GABRIELLE LAVACK

Surely, whoever speaks to me in the right voice, him or her I shall follow, as the waters follow the moon, silently, with fluid steps, anywhere around the globe.—WHITMAN.

I AM not a suspicious man. I have never had either time or inclination to be so. And, aside from the affection I have always felt for my wife, not only for her own sake but as the only child of my dearest friend, I have always had too much faith in her likeness to that dead father to believe for a moment that she could be anything but the incarnation of loyalty, honor and truth. But these last few weeks have grown such a black horror to me . . .

I realize now that I should never have married Eleanor; that it was a crime against more than herself. The woman she has grown into, "the ripened joy of womanhood," should never have been linked to me, valetudinarian, self-absorbed, who have cared only to peer short-sightedly into books, whom life in its fullness has passed by.

How like her father she is! That father who was so dear to me because of his very unlikeness to myself. How I, the weak, puny, retiring student, loved and admired him, strong, splendid, debonair, vital and virile as life itself, the standard by which I measured all the rest of the world, and of which they all fell short!

When she came to me at her father's death, only eighteen, young and shy and quiet, I did not realize what depths of splendid vitality were yet to bloom into being; I did not realize how little I could satisfy her. It seemed so simple, so easy; she was so interested in my work, so eager to be a help to me;

I thought the days would drop one by one quietly into the past always as then. So, meaning well, I married her and robbed her future of all those things which were her birthright, of love and its mystical oneness with the beloved, of little children, things which are but broken dreams to me, but which I can well imagine are poignant, heart breaking joys to people like Eleanor and her father. What a pity that we people who, meaning well, commit irremediable evil, cannot bear alone the results of our deeds!

It is my fault, of course. All the fault and all the blame are mine; I should have known eight years ago when I married her, and spared her this. And yet, how monstrous it is—how unbelievable! Weak as I am, how I would strangle with my own hands the lying throat, and gloat over the purpling, dying face of anyone who dared say to me that Eleanor has a lover! Yet I myself have seen . . .

God!

Two months ago, I saw her first with him. She was sitting on a bench in the garden reading. He stood behind, his head bent down to read with her. She came in not long after, and I spoke to her idly:

"Who was that with you, Eleanor?"

She looked at me in surprise.

"With me? When?" she inquired.

"I thought I saw a man with you on the bench in the garden just now."

"I have been alone with my poet," she laughed, waving her green-covered Whitman at me.

A few nights after, coming in at twilight, I found Eleanor playing softly in

the dusk and singing some verses from "Leaves of Grass":

"Blow! Blow!
Blow up, sea winds, along Paumanok's shore;
I wait and I wait till you blow my mate to me.
Loud! Loud!
Loud I call to you, my love!
High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves.
Surely you must know who is here,
You must know who I am, my love."

Leaning against the piano with the careless grace of conscious strength perfectly controlled, was the same man I had seen with Eleanor in the garden.

Her hands dropped from the keys as I entered. She started as if wakened suddenly from dreaming and gave a little cry.

"It is I, dear. Did I startle you?" I hastened to reassure her, switching on the light, and turned to greet her guest.

He was gone.

"I thought someone was with you," I explained in bewilderment. "I was sure someone was standing beside you when I came in."

Her startled glance encircled the room before she answered.

"I was alone with my poet, you see," and she laughingly pointed to the volume of Walt Whitman's poems, bound in green leather, that she had propped up on the piano before her.

"You should not try to read in the dark," I scolded, while my puzzled brain tried to convince itself that it was the victim of an hallucination, and, in spite of myself, my eyes sought the long window opening on the piazza just beside the piano. The curtains were swinging slightly to and fro. Was it from the breeze, I wondered, or had someone passed there?

Then I cursed myself for a fool in doubting even for a moment Eleanor's word.

Eleanor has a favorite haunt in the garden, a little nook inclosed on three sides with a curving line of shrubbery. Here she lies and reads hour after hour with her pretty chin upheld in her slim, white hands. To please me, she has consented to throw a rug down first instead of lying on the grass. She is

reckless of her health and does not fear dampness as I do.

I looked for her there one morning, knowing just what a pretty picture would greet my eyes: Eleanor in a white dress, the long suave curves of her supple body outlined against the background of scarlet rug, her beautiful eyes downcast to her book.

I looked for her there, and I found her just as I had fancied—yet not quite as I had fancied. Stretched beside her on the rug, his head bent to follow with her the printed page, one arm thrown caressingly around her, I saw *him* again!

Not once have I seen his face, but I should recognize his figure anywhere. He is not small like me, but tall and strong and broad-shouldered, every line full of lithe vigor and dominant virility. I am haunted by an indescribable resemblance . . . I had never seen him previous to that afternoon when he stood by Eleanor's bench in the garden, yet I feel a compelling sense that I should remember—should know . . .

Eleanor, my Eleanor! I was not jealous. Thousands of sharp little stabs pierced my heart and red mist danced before my eyes at the thought of her circled by the arms of another man, but I felt no enmity, no anger—only a heart-breaking desire for her happiness—and her good.

Whatever she might do, Eleanor would still be spotless in my eyes; but in the eyes of the world—and in God's? I think that, like Porphyra's lover, I could find courage to strangle her softly with a rope of her silky hair, till her wonderful eyes closed like "shut lily buds"—to keep her pure in the sight of the world—and of God.

They were reading together from that green-covered Whitman of Eleanor's. I am growing to hate the sight of it. Each time I have seen *him*, she has had that book in her hands; indeed, it is always with her. I cannot understand Eleanor's passion for "Leaves of Grass." Since she first came across it and seized upon it for her own, she has thought of nothing else. She has lost all her old interest in my bacteriological research;

she has changed entirely. I cannot pretend to a liking for the book, but to Eleanor, Walt Whitman, with his proud strong songs of the Body coequal with the Soul, Body and Soul indivisible, interfuscent, Walt Whitman, to whom nothing is common or wrong but meanness and lying and the inability to recognize one's close kinship with the friendless, the outcast, the murderer—Walt Whitman is to Eleanor one of the world's Elder Brothers.

I waited on the piazza till she came in hours after. I meant to speak to her, to ask her to trust me with her secret, to seek with her some solution. But when she came my courage weakened; I could not question her—I feared lest she should try to lie to me.

Eleanor lie! What am I saying? Eleanor could not lie. She is honor and truth itself.

My Eleanor, my dead friend's little child! How have I guarded the trust he placed in me! How have I kept faith! By my crass selfishness, my unforgivable lack of foresight in thinking she might be content in a marriage with me, I sinned irretrievably against her; I despoiled her future, and made of love when it should come to her, instead of the glorious flowering of her whole life, a sinful thing, a scarlet blossom of deceit. I am a thief; I have stolen her birthright; yet she must bear the pain and pay the penalty.

Eleanor puzzles me. I would have sworn that any deceit, no matter how trifling, how justifiable, would have been hideous, unbearable to her, that the pain and horror of it would have stolen the color from her cheeks and lips and dulled the rippled lilt of her laugh; that her lovely eyes would necessarily betray the sick horror that her pure soul must feel.

She came swiftly up the path, her usual lithe grace of movement accented a thousandfold, her whole figure bathed in an ineffable content, a joyous serenity that seemed not quite of earth. She came to me, her husband, straight from the arms of her lover, unabashed, radiant.

She brushed the covers of her book as

she came, with a tender motion like that of one caressing a child.

"I have been having such a lovely morning with my poet," she said, looking straight at me, and then—

"Edward! Are you ill?"

It is midnight. The library was chilly tonight, so I am writing this in my own room. My back is toward the open door of Eleanor's room, but I can hear her going to and fro, evidently preparing for bed. In the long mirror that hangs in front of me, I catch occasional glimpses of her as she passes the door. All evening she has been reading "Leaves of Grass," chanting favorite bits half aloud.

She is singing softly as she goes back and forth across the room, that Song of the Bird Who Has Lost Its Mate, that she sang in the twilight in the library:

"Surely you must know who is here,

You must know who I am, my love.

Hither, my love!

Here I am, here!

With this just-sustained note I announce myself to you;

This gentle call is for you, my love!

Do not be—"

The break in her song, the utter stillness following, that seemed surcharged with meaning that throbbed and beat in great waves reaching out ever wider and wider until they filled both rooms, drew my gaze to the mirror . . .

Directly opposite, reflected in the mirror so that the doorway seemed the frame of a picture, stood Eleanor, close clasped to the breast of the man I had seen in the garden. Her white arms were round his neck, her face, glorified, beautiful as I had never seen it, radiant with "that light that never was on land or sea," upturned to the face that bent above her.

It seemed centuries that I gazed at the beautiful picture, numbed, unrealizing. Beautiful Eleanor, in the filmy white gown that only half concealed her loveliness, *he* superb in his virile strength—then my tense breath escaped in a long sobbing exhalation, which, slight as it was, seemed to reverberate with interminable echoes.

At the sound, he raised his head and

faced me in the mirror. For the first time, I saw his face—and then I knew!

The softly luminous aura which surrounded him gave place to gray mist—gray mist which seemed to eat swiftly into the proud strength, the majestic grace of the man, while it left Eleanor untouched. His figure grew fainter, more indistinct—it was gone! Eleanor stood alone.

On the floor at her feet lay the green Whitman, as she had dropped it—and though, with my short-sighted physical

eyes, the open page was but a blank to me, yet I knew well what words were there to meet my gaze could I but see!

Had he not promised?

To one a century hence, or any number of centuries hence,

To you, yet unborn, these seeking you.

When you read these, I, that was visible, am become invisible;

Now it is you, compact, visible, realizing my poems, seeking me,

Fancying how happy you were, if I could be with you, and become your lover;

Be it as if I were with you. *Be not too certain but I am now with you.*



THE COWARDS

By THEODOSIA GARRISON

WHAT shall be said of us who made
Our love a coward thing afraid
Of men's eyes and the open day,
And led it by a secret way
Unto a secret place?

What shall be said of us who pent
Within this place of discontent
One who is glorious and free
As the ninth wave that sways the sea,
Or a great wind released?

What shall be said of us who be
Too weak to own our loyalty;
Who dare not cry to saints above
Or men below, "Behold our love—
How wonderful it is"?

What shall be said of us who hide
A monarch where our hinds might bide,
Nor dare to cry his name aloud
Lest the shrill anger of the crowd
Should name us hosts of his?

What shall be said of us too base
To lift our eyes to Love's sad face,
Lest they be Peter's eyes when he
Denied his Master utterly
Though his heart broke therefor?

L'ACCIDENT DE BRÉBIÈRES-SUD

Par PIERRE MILLE

SI jamais quelqu'un nous eût dit, au bureau de l'inspection commerciale du chemin de fer du Nord, à Arras, où j'étais alors stagiaire, que le petit Doffoy, notre camarade, était marqué pour accomplir des choses impossibles au reste des hommes et mystérieuses, nous aurions haussé les épaules. A vingt-six ans, il avait l'air d'en avoir dix-sept. Il marchait à genoux rapprochés, comme une femme, le dos arrondi, la poitrine étroite. J'ai vu quelquefois, chez le caissier de la gare, de fausses pièces de cent sous faites d'un alliage de cuivre avec un peu d'argent qui blanchissait le métal, mais en lui laissant un reflet jaune : c'était la couleur de ses cheveux. On aurait cru qu'il l'avait fait partir en les lavant au vinaigre et à la potasse, et que cette couleur était retombée sur son visage en petites taches rousses. Enfin ses yeux ennuyaient : des yeux d'un bleu terne et vide qui ne regardaient rien et n'avaient pas de reflet, pareils à certaines mares de ce pays crayeux : de loin elles ont une belle nuance bleu vert ; mais, quand on s'approche, on n'y voit plus rien, ni le fond ni le ciel. On dirait qu'il n'y a jamais assez de lumière pour les réveiller, elles sont dans le jour comme au plus profond des nuits.

Doffoy, très bon employé, n'était jamais remarqué des chefs qu'au moment de l'année où ils doivent rédiger les notes signalétiques. Alors, lisant son nom sur une feuille partagée en colonnes, le sous-inspecteur rêvait un instant : il fallait qu'il pensât quelque chose de Doffoy, et justement il n'en pensait rien. Doffoy était pour lui une mécanique qui servait à faire des

calculs de taxes d'après des barèmes réguliers : est-ce qu'on donne des notes aux machines à écrire ? En vérité, matériellement, on ne voyait pas Doffoy, bien qu'il eût un corps, comme tout le monde, tant ce corps était insignifiant.

Il semblait que l'esprit le fût aussi. Ce n'était point que Doffoy n'eût des opinions, et ne les exprimât, mais elles étaient presque toujours dictées par ses convictions religieuses, restées très vives. Le dimanche il allait à la grand'messe, souvent aux vêpres, et ne manquait ni un pèlerinage ni une procession. Une telle ferveur disciplinée est assez fréquente dans ce pays qui fut espagnol. Toutefois c'est une des tendances de l'Eglise actuelle d'affecter de n'avoir plus peur de la science. Doffoy lisait donc des ouvrages de vulgarisation dont l'objet est de démontrer l'accord de cette science avec la foi. Il en existe maintenant toute une bibliothèque, et qui parle de tout, depuis l'astronomie jusqu'à l'hypnotisme. La tendance de ces ouvrages est de montrer, sous les faits et les lois, la manifestation d'une volonté providentielle. Ainsi l'âme naïve de ce petit expéditionnaire avait fini par concevoir l'univers comme un perpétuel miracle, une ombre projetée sur l'infini par des mains qui font des signes, mais personne ne s'en doutait.

Aux approches de la trentaine, il était resté très timide avec les femmes, et parfaitement chaste. Ce fut donc pour nous un grand étonnement de le voir revenir d'un voyage à Lille, avec une photographie qu'il n'arriva point à nous cacher plus d'une demi-journée. Il aimait. Il aimait de toute la force

de son cœur puéril et de son corps vierge, et il devait épouser "la personne" le jour où il passerait commis. Le bureau de l'inspection commerciale d'un chemin de fer, dans une ville de province, n'est pas un lieu où l'on se pique de délicatesse; mais il ne s'aperçut jamais qu'on le raillait, et parfois avec grossièreté. Il n'y a rien de plus vrai et de plus fort qu'une expression populaire: il n'était plus de ce monde. Tout ce qui, sur la terre, était jeune et beau lui paraissait comme une dépendance naturelle de son amour: la couleur des feuilles, celle des fleurs et leur parfum, le tintement clair d'une cloche, le bruit retentissant des quatre pieds d'un cheval lancé au galop sur le pavé; et il regardait maintenant toutes les filles avec un air hardi et ingénu, comme s'il n'eût pas douté qu'elles n'eussent pu toutes être à lui, puisqu'il était préféré de celle qui lui paraissait la meilleure et la plus belle. Cependant, comme il était pauvre, et la Compagnie chiche de congés, malgré le quart de place dont disposent les employés, il n'allait que rarement la voir.

Mais il arriva un jour au bureau avec une idée qui s'empara si violemment de son cerveau qu'il ne put s'empêcher de dire tout à coup, en ouvrant un magazine,—je crois que c'était *l'Echo du Merveilleux*:

— Pourtant, il paraît qu'on peut se transporter par la pensée auprès des êtres qu'on aime beaucoup, qu'on aime pleinement, et les voir, et se faire sentir à eux. Je vais lui écrire, lui faire savoir qu'elle me verra, demain soir, à cinq heures. Il suffit de tendre sa volonté.

Tout le reste de l'après-midi, et toute la journée du lendemain, il ne parla que de son grand projet, et, lorsqu'il l'oubliait un instant, l'un de nous, toujours, le lui rappelait, par plaisanterie, ou par cette habitude de bavardage oisif qui est le propre des employés de bureau. A cinq heures, il s'absorba complètement, les coudes sur la table.

— Eh bien! dimes-nous, au bout d'un quart d'heure.

Il était demeuré complètement im-

mobile et silencieux. Quelqu'un le tira violemment par le bras, et il s'abattit, à demi renversé, sur son pupitre.

— Je n'ai rien vu, dit-il d'une voix plaintive, rien du tout. Et pourtant j'avais bien concentré, concentré. . . .

Il y avait des larmes dans ses yeux vides.

Delsarte, le commis principal, prononça:

— Parbleu! c'est des blagues. Vous feriez mieux de vous remettre à vos tarifs. Les dix wagons de charbon envoyés de Lens à Fismes. . . . C'est sur l'Est, Fismes. Comment est-ce qu'on départage, entre les deux Compagnies?

Doffoy renouvelait tous les jours son expérience, et elle ne réussissait jamais.

— Je lui ai écrit, disait-il, je lui ai dit que je serais près d'elle. Mais elle m'a répondu qu'elle ne sent rien. Vous avez raison, ce sont des histoires, des histoires. . . . Et pourtant j'aurais eu tant de plaisir!

Mais, un lundi, quand il arriva au bureau, un nouveau projet avait réveillé son espoir.

— J'ai compris, dit-il. Je sais ce qui manquait. Je ne parvenais pas à fixer suffisamment mon attention, parce que je ne suivais pas assez la réalité. Je ne voyais pas la route jusqu'à Lille. Il faut que je voie la route, et que je la fasse.

— Comment ça? demanda Delsarte.

— C'est si facile! J'aurais dû y penser, fit-il. Je prends le train de 4 h. 05.

— Vous avez la permission? fit Delsarte, étonné.

— Oh! non, répondit Doffoy, non. Je n'en ai pas besoin. Je vais voyager en idée. Il me manquait de voyager en idée, pour fixer ma volonté.

Il déjeuna au bureau, comme il avait coutume, du contenu du panier qu'il avait apporté, et travailla ensuite très patiemment, l'esprit libre et dégagé. Mais, vers quatre heures moins le quart, il mit son pardessus et son chapeau.

— Tu pars donc, Doffoy? . . . demandai-je.

— Oui, fit-il avec un petit rire, je pars.

Et, à notre grande stupeur, il se ras-

sit, et commença de parler, les yeux fermés :

— Voilà. Je vais à la gare. Je montre ma carte à Roullot, qui est au guichet. Une seconde, quart de place, pour Lille, s'il vous plaît? . . . Deux francs trente? . . . Voilà. . . . Le train n'a pas de retard? . . . Oui, je vais à Lille. . . . Pour quoi faire? . . . Si on vous le demande, vous direz que vous n'en savez rien, monsieur Roullot!

"On met en queue un fourgon pour Douai. . . . On part. . . . Voilà Blangy, Feuchy, Rœux, et le grand marais du kilomètre 203, avec ses mottes de tourbe qui sèchent, et le passage à niveau de Corbehem. . . .

Il ne prononçait pas ces paroles aussi vite que vous les lisez. Habitué à voyager sur la ligne, il savait, à une minute près, le temps que le rapide mettait entre chaque station, et ne la nommait qu'au moment précis où la locomotive devait franchir les signaux. . . . Vraiment, c'était comme s'il avait lu cet album qu'on place maintenant dans le filet, accroché par une bretelle, et qui donne aux voyageurs une description des pays qu'ils traversent.

— . . . Nous sommes à Douai; on décroche le fourgon. . . . L'embranchement de Lens, celui de Carvin, Ostricourt. . . . Elle est presque finie de bâtir, la nouvelle distillerie Maës. . . . Quatre heures quarante. . . . Voilà les forges de Seclin, avec les tas de laitier qui fument, quels gros tas! . . . ils augmentent tous les jours! Maintenant, c'est Roichin; dans cinq minutes, nous serons à Lille. . . .

Ses muscles se tendirent, comme s'il sautait sur le quai d'une gare.

— Je vais à pied. La rue de la Gare, le théâtre, la Grand'Place, la rue Esquermoise, la rue Royale, et puis la seconde à droite, après l'église Saint-André. Voici la porte, deux marches, un marteau de cuivre, un petit miroir-espion à la fenêtre de gauche. . . . Comme c'est propre, dans l'escalier. . . . Louise, Louise!

— Vous la voyez? demanda Delsarte, dont la voix, involontairement, s'était faite très basse et comme confidentielle.

— Non. . . . Mais je vois la lumière de sa lampe. Aussi vrai que vous êtes là, je vois la lumière de sa lampe. . . . Maintenant, je vois la table, sous la lampe, et, près de la table, le tambour à dentelles. Et puis. . . .

Il s'arrêta et ne dit plus rien, parce qu'il la voyait, sa Louise! Tous ses traits se raidirent. On lui parla, il ne répondit plus.

Delsarte murmura :

— Il est caché-perdu.

C'est un mot du pays. Il voulait dire que Doffoy était ailleurs, perdu, en effet, dans une transe où il ne pouvait plus distinguer que les choses qui se passaient à quinze lieues, et que des yeux humains n'auraient pas dû voir. A la fermeture du bureau, on l'appela pour le réveiller :

— Doffoy! Doffoy!

Il n'entendit pas. Mais quelqu'un ayant, par hasard, agité un mouchoir devant ses cils, il frissonna comme si on lui eût jeté de l'eau à la figure et nous contempla d'un air stupide.

Or, il est sûr, si étrange que cela paraisse, qu'il reçut le lendemain une lettre qui lui faisait savoir que sa Louise était bien réellement, au moment de sa vision, assise sous sa lampe, devant son tambour à dentelles, et, à compter de ce jour, quand on s'ennuyait au bureau il suffisait que l'un de nous demandât :

— Allons, Doffoy, si tu prenais le train?

Tout de suite il nous décrivait le trajet d'Arras à Lille, et des événements qui véritablement se passaient durant ce trajet. Je me souviens encore de la fois où il nous prévint qu'un soldat, au moment des fêtes de Noël, était tombé d'une portière mal fermée sur la voie, au kilomètre 224, près d'Ostricourt, mais qu'il n'avait rien. Delsarte fit téléphoner par curiosité; on ne savait pas encore la nouvelle à Ostricourt, mais plus tard le téléphone interrogea : "Qui vous a appris? . . ." Cependant Doffoy n'était pas encore content. Il disait que sa fiancée, quand il lui écrivait ses visions, demandait par quelle personne il la faisait suivre, car elle refusait de croire qu'il venait tous les jours en esprit auprès d'elle.

— Et pourtant, je la touche, disait-il, mais elle ne le sent pas. C'est que je ne suis pas encore assez fort de volonté, assez détaché d'ici, assez transporté là-bas. Je veux qu'elle me sente près d'elle physiquement.

Quelques semaines plus tard il reçut une dépêche qu'il lut d'un air radieux.

— Elle viendra me voir aujourd'hui à Arras, dit-il. Elle prend le train de 4 h. 27.

Delsarte était un brave homme. Il dit tout de suite:

— Celui qui passe ici à 5 h. 25?

— Eh bien! Doffoy, vous pourrez quitter le bureau à cinq heures. On fermera les yeux."

Mais il ajouta, par plaisanterie:

— Seulement, vous pourrez faire mieux encore, mon ami, c'est de l'accompagner. . . . Mais, oui, puisque vous allez si facilement en esprit d'Arras à Lille, pourquoi ne referiez-vous pas la route en sens inverse, et avec elle?

Doffoy répondit sérieusement:

— C'est une idée.

Il tomba aussitôt, comme il faisait maintenant presque tous les jours, dans une torpeur qui le rendait insensible à ce qui l'entourait, sauf quand on l'interrogeait sur ses rêveries. A la fin, Delsarte demanda:

— Eh bien! est-ce qu'on part?

— Oui. Sa mère ne l'accompagne pas. J'aime mieux ça. . . . Elle à pris le tramway; elle entre dans un compartiment de dames seules, en seconde.

Il s'interrompit pour dire en riant:

— C'est la première fois que je voyage dans un compartiment de dames seules, moi! Je suis à côté de Louise, mais elle ne me voit pas.

Et il continua, selon sa nouvelle habitude, de parler tout seul, décrivant tous les petits incidents du voyage, donnant le titre du journal que lisait Louise, disant qu'il y avait trois autres dames dans le compartiment et que l'une d'elles emmenait son chien dans un panier, tandis que les deux autres étaient des amies qui causaient ensemble. Nous étions trop accoutumés

à son bavardage pour l'écouter attentivement. Mais tout à coup sa figure prit une telle expression d'épouvante qu'il n'y eut pas une exception parmi nous, pas une! Tout le monde avait sauté sur ses pieds, des chaises tombèrent.

— Doffoy, qu'est-ce qu'il y a?

Lui-même avait fait un bond, exactement comme il eut fait dans un compartiment, les genoux limités dans leur élan par l'intervalle des deux banquettes, et il fit le geste d'enlacer quelqu'un et de le jeter de côté: un geste de mâle, qui a une femme à sauver, un geste instinctif, héroïque, vigoureux, démesuré pour sa force de vieil enfant souffreteux.

— Quoi, quoi? Voyons, Doffoy, qu'est-ce qui arrive?

— L'accident, dit-il, — et sa voix avait l'air de passer à travers une bouteille qui se vide, — l'accident. Oh! le bruit, le bruit; et ils crient, et tout se brise, les wagons, notre wagon, les planches qui éclatent. . . . Louise!

Il fit encore le même geste protecteur et tomba comme une masse, en portant les mains à son cou.

— La planche! dit-il une seconde fois. Oh! mon Dieu, mon Dieu! Ah! . . .

Je n'oublierai jamais ce cri, ce cri horrible, dans ce bureau paisible, où pas une plume n'avait bougé. Et les mains de Doffoy qui se mirent à griffer le vide, des mains d'agonisant!

— Doffoy! lui cria Delsarte en se penchant vers lui.

Mais il ne répondit pas, et ses yeux vides étaient devenus si affreusement plus vides!

— Doffoy! répéta Delsarte.

— Je . . . je crois qu'il est mort! murmurai-je.

La moitié des camarades s'étaient enfuies. Ils avaient peur, horriblement peur! Il y en a qui sont restés fous, des jours et des jours. Delsarte regarda tous ceux qui restaient et demanda gravement:

— Où l'accident a-t-il eu lieu?

L'accident avait eu lieu au kilomètre 198, près de Brébières-Sud. Ce jour-là,

on avait doublé le train de Lille, et, entre les deux rames, par une incompréhensible aberration, un aiguilleur avait laissé passer le convoi léger qui dessert les charbonnages, et qui avait du retard. Mais je n'ai pas besoin de parler de la catastrophe de Brébières. Personne ne l'a encore oubliée, dans le Nord!

Le médecin de la Compagnie arriva. Delsarte et moi, nous avions étendu le corps de Doffoy sur le vieux canapé en moleskine qui servait aux veilles. Le médecin lui enleva sa jaquette et son gilet, et fendit sa chemise avec des ciseaux.

— Il a porté les mains derrière son cou, lui dis-je.

Le médecin regarda attentivement.

C'est singulier, fit-il. Il n'y a aucune trace de choc extérieur, et pourtant la moelle a fusé entre la cinquième et la sixième vertèbre cervicale, comme si on y avait enfoncé un clou. La mort a dû être instantanée. . . .

Nous demeurâmes dans le bureau, pour veiller le pauvre Doffoy. Vers minuit, on frappa à la porte.

— Ouvrez vous-même, me dit Delsarte. Moi, je n'ai pas le courage. Je

sens que c'est elle, cette pauvre fille; je l'ai fait prévenir.

Nous vîmes entrer une jeune fille, dont le corsage et la jupe étaient en lambeaux, la figure et les mains écorchées. On l'avait arrachée des débris du wagon comme on avait pu, brutalement, pour la sauver de l'incendie qui commençait. D'un geste, Delsarte lui montra cette forme raide, sur le canapé, et elle s'abattit à genoux, sans pleurer.

Quand on put l'interroger, elle dit seulement :

— Je ne sais pas comment c'est arrivé: j'étais dans un compartiment, avec trois autres dames, quand le choc a eu lieu. Les parois du wagon ont éclaté, les planches sont sorties en échardes, comme des épées. Il paraît qu'il y en a une qui pointait vers moi. Je ne la voyais pas, mais je me suis sentie tirée de côté violemment, par je ne sais quoi. Et c'est lui qui est mort, lui. . . . Comment cela se fait-il?

Alors, je me rappelai le mot de Doffoy :

— Quand je serai assez fort de volonté, elle me sentira près d'elle, physiquement. . . .



LA CIGALE

Par PAUL-AUGUSTE ARÈNE

L'AIR est si chaud que la cigale,
 La pauvre cigale frugale
 Qui se régale de chansons,
 Ne fait plus entendre les sons
 De sa chansonnette inégale.
 Et, rêvant qu'elle agite encor
 Ses petits tambourins de fée,
 Sur l'écorce des pins chauffée
 Où pleure une résine d'or,
 Ivre de soleil elle dort.

THE BOOKS OF THE DOG DAYS

By H. L. MENCKEN

JOHN GALSWORTHY'S book of "PLAYS" (*Putnams*, \$1.50) is a welcome volume, not because the plays in it are good ones, but because they are by Galsworthy. He has won a high place for himself over in England as a writer of novels, and so it is interesting to observe any experiment that he chooses to make in other forms. If he should turn to the epic, the essay, or the limerick the result would be inevitably a composition well worth reading. And, as in the case of the present experiment, one reading would probably be enough. A novelist is a novelist and a playwright is a playwright. The difference between them is as abysmal as that between engraving on zinc and engraving on steel.

There are three dramas in this Galsworthy collection—"The Silver Box," "Joy," and "Strife." The first, which was seen for a brief season on the New York stage, is a Socialistic tract upon the sorrows of the poor. There are two drunken loafers in the play—one the idle son of a rich father and the other the idle husband of a hard working wife. Both steal and both are caught. For the rich thief the law provides punishment in the shape of a bad scare. For the poor thief it provides thirty days with hard labor.

The real victims, of course, are the father and wife. The former suffers acute mental anguish and certain very material disadvantages, for he is a public man, and the latter suffers the break-up of her home, miserable as it is, and the loss of a good situation, for she has been accused of the crime her husband has committed, and only clears herself after languishing a while in the watch

house. As for the thieves themselves, they acquire no permanent scars. The rich young idler soon forgets his scare, and the felonious pauper is not greatly incommoded by his thirty days.

It will be observed that the dialectic purpose of this drama, if it has any at all, is considerably muddled. Admitting it to be a fair picture of plausible human transactions—and we have a right to demand that every stage play be that—what is the answer? I confess that I don't know. I do know, however, that Mr. Galsworthy's characters, in the main, are very unconvincing stock types from the musty storehouse of the drama. The rich father, with his political hypocrisy and fondness for platitudes, comes from the earlier plays of Pinero, and the idle young rascal of a son strongly suggests the Robertsonian era. As for the pauper and his wife, they belong to the Niebelungen Ring of Socialism. In "Major Barbara" they were far more interesting.

"Joy" is of even less dramatic value than "The Silver Box," but its dialogue is more ingenious and its people are more human. The situation it sets forth is essentially that of George Moore's "Agnes Lahens." A woman with a daughter at the age of dawning intelligence acquires a lover, and proceeds to the herculean enterprise of carrying one upon each shoulder. The thing, of course, is impossible, for the daughter, with all a virtuous woman's passion for pronouncing sentence first and trying the case afterwards, excommunicates both mother and lover forthwith. The drama is played in the soul of the daughter; the others merely feed

the fires that rage there. It is a drama of no little poignancy, and Mr. Galsworthy is aware of it, but it is also one that requires a high order of skill for its working out in stage form. Mr. Galsworthy is yet devoid of that skill. His play creaks at the joints. Intent upon producing effects, he is unable to mask the devices whereby they are produced.

"Strife," in some ways, is the best of the three plays. It tells the story of a mine strike, and it sets forth with considerable insight the insincerity which marks such contests on both sides. On the surface a strike is a war to the death between groaning labor and predatory capital, or groaning capital and predatory labor, as you please. At bottom, it is usually a fight between two men, each with a savage lust for conquest in his heart. The stockholders that go broke and the strikers' wives that starve are innocent sacrifices to the *wille zur macht* of these inhuman duelists.

Again Mr. Galsworthy's technique fails. Again his characters smell of the storehouse. Again his dialogue is leaden. Again he proves that an excellent novelist usually makes an indifferent dramatist.

It would be difficult to imagine two men more utterly unlike in externals than Hall Caine and John D. Rockefeller, and yet the autobiographies of the pair, published recently, have more than a little in common. In each the author attempts to draw a picture of himself as he would have posterity and the celestial grand jury see him, and both pictures, naturally enough, are marked by magnificent charity. Caine, indeed, does not hesitate to hint that he is one of the first *illuminati* of the age. And John D., on his part, wants it to be understood that he is a fine old fellow, with the soft heart of a Tammany leader and the corundum virtue of an early Christian martyr. So much for the aims of Hall and John as conscious artists. Fortunately for the reader, their most elaborate effects, like those of every other artist, are conditioned and modified by touches of uncon-

scious self-revelation. Behind the picture we always glimpse the man, and the man is often more interesting than the picture.

Caine's book is called "My Story" (Appleton, \$1.50) and is a tome of considerable bulk and dignity. He begins with an account of his childhood on the Isle of Man, and he ends with a chapter of "beautiful" reflections upon the obsequies of Wordsworth and Tennyson. The youthful Caine, it appears, was a true father to the man—a hard-working, ambitious, bumptious, assertive youngster who took his work with vast seriousness and was eager for a word of praise, however insincere. He pestered the literary lions of the day with letters; he gave them his manuscripts to read, and he filed away their good-natured commendations in his archives. Some of these commendations he prints in his book, and there they constitute an eternal proof of the folly of politeness.

With the drug-soaked and melodramatic Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Caine struck up what he seems to regard as a memorable friendship. As a matter of fact, his own story of it leads to the suspicion that Rossetti looked upon him as a sort of literary butler and private *claque*. The poet yearned for an ever-faithful audience—one that would be ready to huzzah whenever a huzzah would help his digestion. Caine filled the bill. His worship was constant and copious, for he felt that the greater the god the greater the devotee. He was ready to admire day or night. Even Rossetti's capacity for chloral excited his awe.

The autobiography of such a man must needs be an intensely interesting human document. It is not often that we can get so intimate a view of a common mind, for it is only rarely that a common mind is articulate. Suppose you could actually look into the cerebellum of the man who mows your chin, or of the woman who dusts your office, or of your trousers presser, your ward leader, your father-in-law, or any other human blank of your acquaintance: what a host of interesting discoveries

you would make! You would learn in one easy lesson why it is that sentient beings, theoretically sane, join fraternal orders, march in parades, go to political meetings, wear badges, read the poems of Ella Wheeler Wilcox and weep over the plays and novels of Hall Caine. As it is, the thing is an impenetrable mystery, and it will remain so until someone establishes a science of comparative psychology and gives exhaustive study to the embryology of mental processes. Meanwhile, it helps us a bit to examine the anatomy and physiology of a mind that is obviously in tune (to borrow a phrase from wireless telegraphy) with the mass mind of the fraternalists, the paraders, the badge wearers. At all events, the book throws some light upon the elusive psychic states which precede the genesis of a platitude and are necessary to the evolution of bathos.

Caine's own story, in a word, is ten times as engrossing as any of his novels. That he is a novelist of subtlety and skill I do not presume to deny, but I am on safe ground, I believe, when I maintain that it would take a whole seminary of Thackerays, working day and night, in eight-hour shifts for a geological epoch, to create a character as interesting as Hall Caine himself.

THE other book, that of Mr. Rockefeller, entitled "RANDOM RECOLLECTIONS OF MEN AND EVENTS" (*Double-day-Page*, \$1.00) is less ingenuous than Caine's, but scarcely less readable. The Oil King is on the defensive throughout, and in his defense he employs not only common logic and ignoble facts, but also sophistry and paralogy of a high order. This is not sarcasm; I mean it seriously. Logic and facts are within the reach of all, and any numskull can show that twice two is four, but it takes ability of a rare sort to demonstrate the inconceivable. And yet John D. does it constantly, and with the ease of a psychical researcher proving the existence of spooks. When he lays down, for example, the thesis that the Standard Oil Company is a law-abiding and patriotic corporation, he not only lays

it down, but also proves it triumphantly. You may know that he is wrong in premise and conclusion as certainly as you know that virtue is its own punishment, and yet, when he comes to *quod erat demonstrandum*, and looks up into your eyes with that pious smile of his, you are literally forced to believe him, no matter how piteously your tortured intelligence shrieks. If you would find his equal in the higher chicanery of the dialectic, you must go back to St. Augustine, Tertullian, Origen, Philo Judæus and St. Hilary of Poitiers.

This book will give you a new respect for the Oil King. He is not merely a money grubber plus a theologian, but a man of imagination and mental beam, full of daring and originality and skilled in all the casuistry of the jury lawyer, the ballyhoo evangelist and the politician. And when he abandons the hortatory mood and descends to plain exposition, he is beautifully clear and convincing. His ideas about everything he discusses, whether it be gardening, accounting, pathology or ecclesiastic promoting, are those of a far-seeing, reflective man, and he sets them forth in simple English. There is nothing of the visionary about him. The one god in his Olympus is Efficiency—and Efficiency, if you come to think of it, is a very passable divinity.

A THIRD autobiography of a picturesque sort is "TWENTY YEARS IN HELL WITH THE BEEF TRUST," by Roger R. Shiel. Shiel, it seems, is a hog baron of Indianapolis, and his book tells the story of his lifelong investigations into the embryology, dietetics, slaughtering, post-mortem disposition and political economy of his favorite quadruped. He believes that the breed of hogs could and should be improved, and he believes the same thing of the breed of pork packers. His opinions are expressed with incandescent heat and exotic grammar, and altogether his book is a literary curiosity of a rare sort. You will begin by laughing at him, but you will end with no little ad-

miration for the man. It seems a grotesque ambition to make all the yearling hogs in the United States weigh ten pounds more than their fathers at the same age, but it is out of such ambitions that human progress arises.

THE story of one of the most remarkable women that Ireland ever produced is told in Edmund B. d'Auvergne's biography of "LOLA MONTEZ" (Lane, \$4.00). Lola has been roasting in Gehenna for forty-eight long years, and so the world is fast forgetting her, but in her time she was a personage of the first consideration. A graceful, bright-eyed, insidious, bewitching hussy, she had only to look on a man to make him her slave; but however much she enjoyed such conquests of the flesh, they never quite satisfied her. She regarded them, indeed, as but means to an end for there was always some fantastic crusading impulse behind her smile. She made a fool of Ludwig of Bavaria in order that she might combat the Jesuits who invaded his kingdom. Her piety was of the early Victorian brand; she hated, not sin, but heresy; not immorality, but its color. Like some fascinating saint of the ages of faith, she was willing to sell her kisses that the true gods might reign.

At the start of her career Lola was all drab; at its end she was all *religieuse*. With her beauty went her last spark of enjoyment in the game for its own sake. She died in the odor of sanctity, with a parson bending low over her, making the colossal promises that parsons presume to make. "If ever a repentant soul loathed past sin," said this ecclesiastic afterward, "I believe hers did." It is to be regretted that the picture has come down to us. Lola triumphant was stupendous; Lola repentant was merely absurd.

Mr. d'Auvergne's loathing for sin seems to be well-nigh as virulent as Lola's. He uses the soft pedal constantly; he seems to be sorry that his heroine was so frisky in her youth, and to regret sincerely that he can't prove her a virgin. This attitude makes his

study of her character, of her impulses and motives, of no value whatever. But the story that he has to tell is so interesting in itself that his shortcomings cannot spoil it. I read every word on his nearly four hundred pages.

"AN ANARCHIST WOMAN," by Hutchins Hapgood (*Duffield*, \$1.50), is the story of a slum girl's evolution into a princess of the Reds, and Mr. Hapgood seems to think that it throws no little light upon the mental processes which culminate in the rejection of all government and codes of morality. In this he is in error. As he depicts her, indeed, his heroine shows scarcely any mental processes at all. She is an animal at the start and an animal at the end. The impulse which leads her to the harem of her Chicago bravo is that which leads her, now and again, to actual prostitution—the commonplace desire to achieve a maximum of alcohol at a minimum of effort. She is, in brief, a thoroughly dissolute beast, whose badly digested stock of "advanced" theories is comparable, in lucidity, to a negro bishop's discourse on immortality. As a philosophical idea, Anarchy is apparently as far beyond her grasp as Ehrlich's theory of immunity. All she seems able to gather is that it is a scheme of things which offers some color of excuse for her native swinishness.

But, inasmuch as the book is not fiction but the true story of a real woman, told, in the main, by her own letters, it has no little psychological value. People of her sort are not rare in the world, and it is of interest to study them. In the present case, however, it is important to bear in mind that the subject of study is not a philosopher but a drab. The fact that she professes to be an Anarchist is of no more importance than the fact that she has "large eyes, dark and glowing."

When he took his pen in hand Mr. Hapgood bade farewell to blushes. The result is a book whose frankness makes the kittenish pornography of "Three Weeks" fade from the enraptured mind. If I had the time, I should make a cata-

logue of the most feverish passages, for the benefit of those connoisseurs who shrink from the labor of searching them out. As it is, I can only recommend page 163.

IN "THE PEOPLE AT PLAY," by Rolin Lynde Hartt (*Houghton-Mifflin*, \$1.50), the author snoops thoughtlessly along the edges of a field that the great majority of American writers seem afraid to enter—if they are actually aware of it at all. Our current fiction, whether it takes the novel form or that of the stage play, concerns itself almost exclusively with the soul struggles of the opulent minority. Its typical hero, if he is not already rich when the curtain rises upon him, is nearly certain to achieve riches before it falls. His psychological history is that of a *magnifico*; his thoughts are never colored by his belly needs. Intensely interested in the price of first mortgage bonds, he has no interest at all in the price of soup meat. Only occasionally does an American writer, in a "McTeague" or a "Sister Carrie," consider the problems and passions of that average American who makes up the nether millions—that average American to whom the struggle for existence is a very real thing, because his average annual income, as the census reports tell us, is less than six hundred dollars.

Mr. Hartt, in his book, takes a look at the brute—and then explodes in roars of merriment. The great masses of the plain people, he discovers, are exceedingly amusing, particularly when they seek amusement. They go to the ball game, and actually grow excited over the exploits of the low fellows out on the diamond. They go to their cheap theater, and actually weep with joy when the honest working girl triumphs over the seducer and lifts up her chaste lips to the hero. They long for something to make them forget the heat and burden of the day, and that something, because their minds are not attuned to the finer sort of stimulus, must have plenty of steam behind it. Therefore, they are ridiculous.

Mr. Hartt, it may be admitted, is right in his final conclusion, but the route whereby he reaches it shows him to be a philosopher of a singularly superficial sort. He constantly assumes, in a word, that the comic flavor which he finds in the amusements of the proletariat is peculiar to the sports of that caste. In this assumption he overlooks entirely the fundamental psychological fact that the essence of diversion is futility, and that futility necessarily involves an exaggerated disproportion between means and end, which, in itself, is the essence of the ridiculous. He points out, very justly, that the spectacle of a New York garbage man reading the editorial page of the *Evening Journal* is comic, but he seems to forget that the spectacle of an educated and presumably civilized Bostonian reading the genealogical page of the *Transcript* is even more comic. Both men are throwing away their time in a grotesquely wasteful manner, and both are enjoying it.

A fat statesman ponderously galloping about his golf links, a melomaniac puzzling over the opening chords of "Elektra," a millionaire bidding \$10,000 for a First Folio Shakespeare, a shop girl sweating diabolically at a dance in a hall over a livery stable—all are ridiculous, because all are employing herculean means to attain scarcely appreciable ends. But here is comedy that we had better enjoy quietly, and, as it were, in our sleeves. Not one of us can afford the loud guffaws of Mr. Hartt, for not one of us escapes service in turn, as performer. As for the plain people, considered as a class, it is well to admit that our kinship with them, while vague in some respects, is assertively obvious in others. When they attempt serious cogitation in the departments of politics, philosophy, or religion, it is always safe, perhaps, to laugh at them and even to hoot them, turn the hose on them and chase them out of the synagogue; but in their hours of ease, when their aim is merely to kill time in some engrossingly elaborate and futile manner, it is probably more discreet to laugh with them.

"ALCOHOL," by Dr. Henry S. Williams (*Century Co.*, 50 cents), is a chap-book against the most delightful of all juices. Dr. Williams is no blowzy evangelist, howling in a gospel tent, but a pathologist of learning and intelligence. The question as to whether a winebibber can ever hope to go to Heaven does not interest him. All he seeks to discover and set forth is the effect of alcohol upon the mental and bodily machinery. His conclusion seems to be that that effect is constantly pernicious. Even in small doses, he says, alcohol attacks the vital organs, interferes with the mental processes and promotes the growth of the germs of disease. The man who absorbs even as little as one ounce of alcohol a week is appreciably less valuable as a citizen than the man who absorbs none at all.

The Doctor's statistics are overwhelming, and his conclusions, on their face, seem to be perfectly sound; but, like all students of tables and percentages, he is often unable to see the facts for the figures. He proves, for example, that fifty per cent., more or less, of all criminals are devotees of the stein and goblet, and he seems to conclude therefrom that alcohol is responsible for fifty per cent. of all crime. A moment's reflection will show the fallaciousness of this. The same mode of reasoning, indeed, will prove that alcohol is responsible for fifty per cent. of all poetry, sixty per cent. of all philosophy, seventy per cent. of all prose fiction and ninety-nine per cent. of all music.

The notion that teetotalers, as a class, are more valuable to the race than moderate drinkers is one that we should not accept with too much alacrity. Drink, true enough, is responsible for many crimes of violence, but such crimes, in the last analysis, are less harmful to society than those done in cold blood. And your cold-blooded criminal, whether he be a burglar, a Mormon elder, or a Tammany leader, is almost always assertively sober. In its long journey down the ages, indeed, the chief burdens of the water wagon

have been vileness and theology. It was a teetotaler, I have no doubt, that gave us the doctrine of infant damnation, but it was a joyful, clean-minded pothouse athlete that gave us "Much Ado About Nothing."

Dr. Williams's proofs that total abstinence is necessary to extreme longevity are convincing without being impressive. Before the human race will accept the conclusions he draws from them, it must first accept the theory that the usefulness and agreeableness of life are to be measured by its duration, and by its duration only. No such theory is held today by sane men. We estimate an individual life, not by its length, but by its breadth. Fifty years of Shakespeare were worth more to the world than the innumerable hundreds of all the centenarians that ever lived.

I voice these modest objections, not because I hold a brief for alcohol, but because I want to show that the fearsome figures of the anti-rum crusaders are not to be taken too seriously. The ideal of human existence that they have before them is not that of intelligent, efficient men. It is too austere, too drab, too nearly bloodless. They forget that there is such a thing as an art of life—that civilization, at bottom, is really a successful conspiracy to defy and nullify the simple laws which secure the perpetuation of the protozoa. The physical act of reading a book obviously shortens life, for it not only strains the eyes but also tends to compress the lungs and other viscera and to atrophy the disused muscles of leg and arm; but the man of thirty who has read many books is more creditable to the race, all other things being equal, than the man of ninety who has merely lived ninety years. The argument for alcohol, though by no means identical, is at least similar. Its crimes cry aloud to heaven, but its services are not to be forgotten. When we are told that it makes life shorter, let us remember that, by dulling the tragedies of existence and heightening the joys, it also makes life more bearable. How saith the ancient scribe? "A short life and a merry one—"

A COLD-WATER book of another sort is "THE REVELLERS," by the Rev. R. E. McBride (*Broadway Pub. Co.*, \$1.25). It is the purpose of the reverend author to prove that Euripides, the great Greek dramatist, was a prohibitionist, and that the choruses in his *Bacchai* are really subtle attacks upon the rum devil. Like the *Book of Revelation*, this argument is intensely interesting but extremely unconvincing.

"THE HALF MOON," by Ford Maddox Hueffer, once Joseph Conrad's collaborator (*Doubleday-Page*, \$1.35), is an exceedingly interesting attempt to pry into the psychology of a historical episode. We know that Hendrik Hudson had a thirst for exploration in his heart and that on one of his voyages he discovered the Hudson River. Why this thirst of Hendrik? And why were men eager to go with him? Mr. Hueffer seeks an answer by essaying to reconstruct the period—not only its externals, but also those deep currents of thought and impulse which, by their unique combination, made it differ from all other periods. The result is a book of curious fascination—a historical novel which has almost nothing in common with other historical novels.

IN "THE SHADOW OF THE CRESCENT," by Edward Bedinger Mitchell (*Stokes*, \$1.50), the author attempts the experiment of moving the delectable principality of Zenda into the Levant. This experiment, it must be confessed, is not only novel, but also successful. We have all the pistol play, midnight galloping and magnificent love making of the early Hope stories—against a rococo Oriental background. Altogether, it's a delightfully impossible story, told in safe journalese and without any vain attempts at literary adornment.

ANOTHER hot-weather novel with thrills in it is "WAYLAID BY WIRELESS," by Edwin Balmer (*Small-Maynard*, \$1.50). The author is the same *littérateur* who devised the central situation of the popular play called "Via

Wireless." It would be unjust to him to give an outline of his present fable. Suffice it to say that the chief character employs the wireless telegraph of a big Atlantic liner in a way which should suggest a new means of felony to the gentlemen gamblers of the smoking rooms.

A PUZZLING book is "FLEET STREET AND OTHER POEMS" (*Kennerley*, \$1.25), by John Davidson, an English poet, who recently expressed his dissent from the scheme of things by committing suicide. Davidson in his day wrote many an excellent verse, but toward the end of his life the labor of clear thinking became oppressive to him and he set up shop as a sort of latter-day Walt Whitman. The so-called poems in this posthumous volume show the deplorable result. The thoughts at the bottom of them are such as might have been formulated by a drunken pillar saint of the middle ages on contemplating the mysteries of the universe. The language in which they are uttered is the ultra-scientific jargon of a somewhat bumptious first-year physics student. A sample outburst:

Fleet Street was once a silence in the ether.
The carbon, iron, copper, silicon,
Zinc, aluminum, vapours, metalloids,
Constituents of the skeleton and shell
Of Fleet Street—of the woodwork, metal-
work,
Brickwork, electric apparatus, drains
And printing presses, conduits, pavements,
road—
Were at the first unelemental space,
Imponderable tension in the dark
Consummate matter of eternity.

But let us not dwell upon the crimes of the dead.

A COMPILATION worth while is Mrs. Harriet P. Lynch's "YEAR BOOK OF SOUTHERN POETS" (*Dodge*, \$1.25). There is a quotation for every day in the year, and some of them are from the writings of bards little known in the North. Mrs. Lynch has managed, with considerable skill, to select the best lines of each. It is somewhat surprising, however, to find that she has omitted all mention of four of the most de-

lightful singers the South has ever produced. I allude to Lizette Woodworth Reese, Robert Loveman, Frank Stanton and Folger McKinsey—two Georgians and two Marylanders. Miss Reese's sonnet, "Tears," I believe is the most beautiful sonnet ever written by an American, and Mr. Loveman's little song, "It Isn't Raining Rain to Me," the most exquisite lyric. The work of Stanton and McKinsey, perhaps, falls short of such heights, but at its best it is very good indeed. Certainly not a dozen American poets, North or South, have ever exceeded the charm of Stanton's love songs or of McKinsey's fragrant ballads of old Maryland. These men have nothing in common with the old school Southern minnesingers—of which tiresome legion the late James Ryder Randall was a horrible example—for neither goes in for patriotic bathos. On the contrary, they are true poets, whose delight in a beautiful thing is for its own sake.

WHERE THE FISHERS GO—
by P. W. Browne.

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POEMS—

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THE TRANSITION—

by Rev. John L. Hill.

(*Broadway Pub. Co.*, \$1.50)

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(*Silver Lotus Shop*, \$1.50)

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by George Hartmann.

(*Broadway Pub. Co.*, \$1.00)

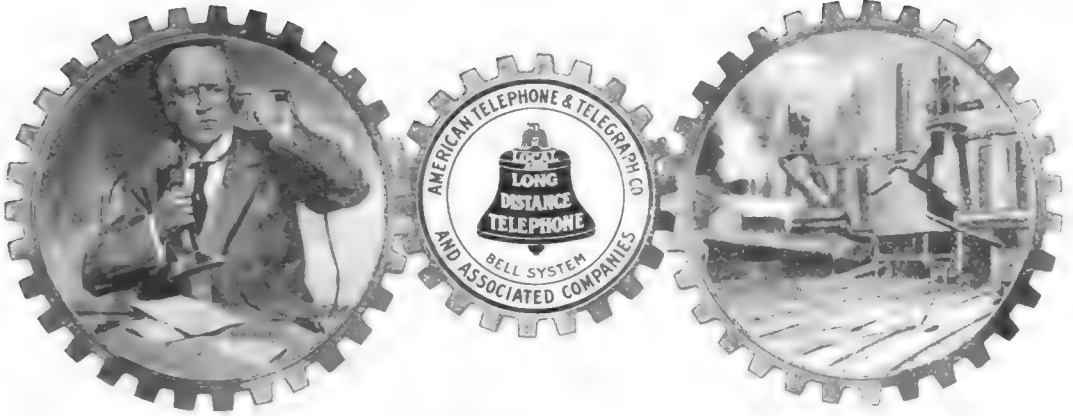
Reminiscences of early days in the Southwest. The author's lamentable delusion that he is a humorist makes for heavy reading.

THE RURAL SCHOOLTEACHER—

by Buchanan White.

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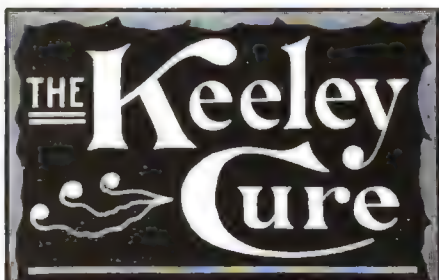
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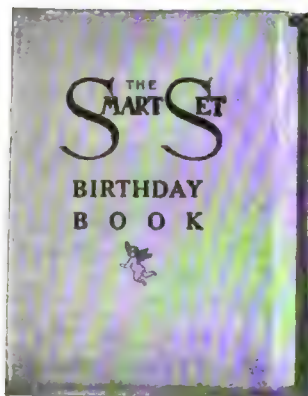
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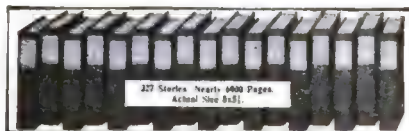
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for OCTOBER

Look out next month for the greatest sensational feature the SMART SET has ever published.

GELETT BURGESS'S Novel, "**The Cave Man**," which will appear complete in the OCTOBER number, is a red-hot sizzling satire on some modern conditions that will readily identify themselves to every reader. Mr. Burgess stands easily among the two or three most brilliant writers in America. His name is a synonym for keen thought and forceful utterance. His literary work is cleverness raised to the *n*th power. He is one of the high priests of Iconoclasm. His story will be one of the epoch-making books of the year, and will be published complete in this magazine without abridgment or emendation.

New York City is the scene of action. The actors are types of people whose gay doings fill the newspaper columns every day. The antics and capers of the blue-bloods and the *nouveaux riches* and the climbers, and the peculiar point of view of certain eminent strivers both within and without the pale, are thrown into high relief through the advent of a peculiar paleolithic individual who smashes his way upward from the lowest rung of the "Submerged Tenth" into the innermost circles of the elect.

Mr. Burgess in this tale has broken the record for tense, brilliant, absorbing work.

Other stories to appear in October include:

"**The Restoration of Miss Willy McNeal**," by Algernon Tassin. A story of an actress of the old school, sweet, modest, touching in her acceptance of forced retirement and lovable and unassuming in the new opportunity that comes to her in her later years.

"**Simeon Craig's Last Words**," by Fred-eric Taber Cooper. Thrilling in its vivid depiction of a wild ride, its tragic end and a woman's subsequent agony of soul.

"**The Gamester**," by Kendrick Scofield. What happened to a woman who matched her wits against those of an unscrupulous man.

"**From the Side Lines**," by Stuart Patterson. A bright, breezy story of a capricious girl, a bashful man unused to the wiles of woman, and a good coach.

"**Sunbeam**," by Federico Mariani. A delightful one-act play, as interesting in the reading quality as in its acting.

"**The Clever Mrs. Salisbury**," by Anne Warner. The clash of woman's cleverness with man's masterful domination. Like the impact of an irresistible force with an immovable object. What is the result? In this case not entirely the expected.

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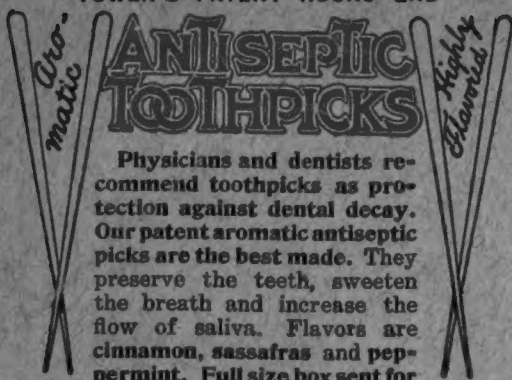
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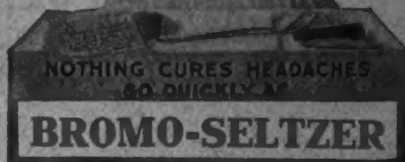
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